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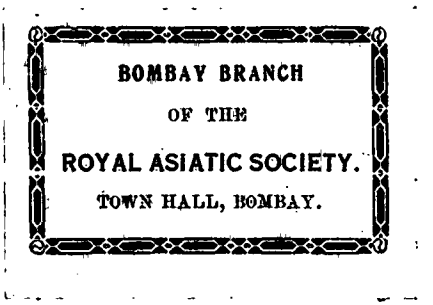

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THE

NIGHT BEFORE THE BRIDAL,

AND

OTHER POEMS.

LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

THE

NIGHT BEFORE THE BRIDAL.

A

Spanish Tale.

SAPPHO,

A DRAMATIC SKETCH,

16916
ae

AND

OTHER POEMS.

By CATHARINE GRACE GARNETT.

LL.L.19

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR

LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, BROWN, AND GREEN,

PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1824.

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TO AN ABSENT FRIEND.

To thee, proved faithful, when, estranged and far,
Some whom I loved withheld their sympathy,
And mark'd, unmoved, Fate cloud my early star,
And Sorrow stamp my opening destiny:
To thee, who, midst the elemental war
Of Ocean with the Wind-god raging high,
Still bearest in thy heart the electric chain,
I dedicate this wild unskilful strain.

Enough for thee to know that it hath proved
My pastime and employ through many an hour,
Which else had linger'd heavily. I loved
To yield me to its all engrossing power,
And with my fancy all my mind was moved
With hope that thou, when next my summer bower
Was deck'd with bloom, wouldst kindly list the lay
That wiled my hours on lighter wing away.

All day I sit upon the surge-worn beach,
My cheek and brow by seaward breezes fann'd,
Marking the curlew o'er the waters stretch
Her downy wing, or sea-weed dank expand,
Or lessening vessel in the horizon's reach;
Or watch the small waves ripple to the strand,
While the vast ether, floating wide above,
Is sparkling with the azure light of love.

Then evening comes, and eve, like autumn, brings
Thoughts of departing time,—I think on thee;
The sun sinks down, but, ere his parting, flings
One broad deep flush along the purpling sea,
Richer than canopy of Asian kings;
And the sky glows with its own blazonry;—
Then the tint fades on headland and on bay,
The heavens are sombre all, the ocean grey.

My casement opes upon the moon-lit deep,
Now while I write; and all the earth is still,
Save some faint sounds that o'er the waters creep,—
The breathing of a flute, or bugle shrill,
Which, as the landward breeze the ripples sweep,
Steal from the sheltering cove of yonder hill;
Then all is hush'd, and but the ebbing tide
Murmurs its sweet adieus on either side.

Around my portal waves a grove of balm,
Myrtle and spray-white jasmine, on whose stem
The chequered moonlight falls in circles calm;
The dew within each leaf, an impearl'd gem,
Lies shrined in living emerald. One tall palm
Towers o'er my woodbine wreaths, as shielding them,
In jealous fondness, from the amorous sigh
Of the young wanton zephyrs wandering by.

But night has other scenes, — the circling year
A sterner aspect,— rude the autumnal rain
Bears on the fading bowers, whose blossoms sere
Perfume the gale no more. Then heaves the main,
With voice vibrating in the caverns near;
The storm-scathed rocks beat back the waves,—again
They lash them, and, foam whitening to the shore,
Each on his fellow rolls, with dread and deafening roar.

Oh! then my mind, with tenfold terror fraught,
Most dwells with thee: where—where my friend art thou
On nights like these? Away on winged thought
My fancy flies: I see the vessel's prow
Whelm'd in the billows,— sheltering harbour sought—
'Tis but the stormy Cape;—what see I now?
Ah God! The fisher's fragile bark comes home
In safety — so, Heaven guard thee! thou shalt come.

I send this wild romaunt to meet thine eye,
Because I know thou lovest the ancient tale
Of long disused, harp-sung chivalry:
How gentle maiden pined all passion-pale
The star-lit night away, — or eloquently,
How some moon-stricken knight, in deepening vale,
From love and lady's favour banish'd far,
Play'd ditties sad upon his sweet guitar.

When last I sang of Spain's romantic clime,
Thou praisedst the theme to which my harp was strung;
Albeit by some it might be deem'd a crime,
That I, when others had such witchery flung
Over the scene, should, out of tune and time,
Essay a scene already nobly sung;
Or gather sweets within her gorgeous bowers,
Like wild bee hovering o'er the trelliss'd flowers.

But not for them framed I that Spanish lay,
Nor yet for thee, though now my mandolin
Obeys thy call: and if, when I essay
To charm thy ear alone, one wreath I win —
But I'll not think on that, I only pray
The usual award of mercy on my sin:
Now to my theme, — thou art no critic stern,
And if in aught my strain offend thee — burn.

TORQUAY,
September 10. 1823.

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THE

NIGHT BEFORE THE BRIDAL.

CANTO FIRST.

But now I am returned, and that war-thoughts
Have left their places vacant, in their rooms
Come thronging soft and delicate desires
All prompting me how fair young Hero is.

Much Ado about Nothing.

I.

HERALD of Evening! Star Hesperian hail!
Thy azure ray gleams tremulously pale,
The reign of night comes sweetly on, but still
The sun, half hid behind the vine-clad hill,
Glows fiercely through the twilight's dusky veil:
It is the hour of prayer in proud Seville! (1)
Vassal and lord, high priest and warrior,
Peasant toil-worn and listless loiterer,
By one vast impulse sway'd, all silent kneel,

Each as that hour hath found him, when and where
He saw that sign, and heard the call to prayer.
The pause is like the dull repose of death,
You might almost discern the in-drawn breath;
But this is transient as the sunset glare,
The lessening disk descends, — departs, — 'tis gone!
Again the living tide rolls broadly on.

II.

Hesperian Star! The eye still rests on thee,
Most beauteous in the dim obscurity;
Like woman's smile serenely clear and bright,
When man's wild hopes are quench'd in sorrow's night!
The banners droop along the rampart walls,
Pale twilight steals on bower and balcony;
The fount within St. Francis' sacred halls,
In its deep basin plays melodiously.
Oh! for a breeze to raise the perfumed sighs
From fair Sevilla's golden orang'ries!
Oh! for a breath to waft the notes that tremble
From some Enamorato's thrilling lute!
He sings of beaming eyes, — eyes which resemble
The summer stars, when from their heights they shoot

Down the horizon's verge, and make earth mute
With watching and divining their sweet mysteries.

III.

Where in Sevillian towers beam eyes like thine,
Young votary of Paolo's sainted shrine —
Helena — art thou bending o'er thy beads
In shaded cell, where thy young beauty pleads
With Heaven, not vainly, for this world of sin?
One vesper hymn of thine, might entrance win
For spirits, by their wild transgressions driven
From thence, at the eternal gate of heaven!
Where art thou Helena? I search'd the cell,
The choir, the chapelry's dim solitude,
Where thou wert wont, in pensive pious mood,
To meet the summons of the evening bell.

IV.

There is a garden grove in fair Seville,
Close where the river rolls its ample flood;
And you may watch the boats glide by on keel
Beset with spray — the fishes' finny brood,
Or the young cygnet with her parent swan
Arching their white necks in the noon-day sun:

Or in the ev'ning from that fairy strand,
See the broad moonbeam on the wave expand.
There wore away the leisure hours of one
Whose sands of life had past their zenith run.
He was no stoic stern, the world had been
To him a wild, but not unjoyous scene;
Love, glory, wealth, the camp, the festive hall,
To him were open, and he proved them all:
All in their season sated, save the camp, —
Still Miguel loved the deep-mouth'd cannon's roar;
His heart yet bounded to the martial tramp
Of steed bedight in panoply of war.
And those were days of bloodshed — Europe's gaze (2)
Was fix'd on Gallia's and on Spain's affrays;
And jealous England, and Rome's mitred crown,
Strove, though with adverse sway, to bind them down.
Heedless if on Milan's or Gallia's plain,
Don Miguel, brave as in his young renown,
Took helm and lance, and girt his sword again.

V.

He left a lonely hearth, and mansion lone,
For she, the partner of his youth, was gone

Before him to that land whence none return:
Long had he bent in sorrow o'er her urn,
With one sweet legacy, the only gift
His lost Proxena to his care had left.
But she, his Helena, was vowed to God!
Even from her cradle — expiatory
Of sins, and filial duties violate — which he
Did in his youth-time perpetrate. — His sire
Had on that union imprecations dire
Pronounced — for she was of a tainted line
Whose paynim brows had bow'd at Mecca's shrine:
And though Proxena was all form'd to bless,
The stern Hidalgo cursed her not the less.
'Tis hard to live beneath a father's curse,
And in the world's corrupted language, worse
The forfeiture of patrimonial dower:
Thus Miguel thought, and in repentant hour
He vow'd to dedicate the babe away,
Who yet within Proxena's bosom lay.
This from her earliest years Helena knew,
And high thoughts in her infant bosom grew;
She felt she was a pure thing set apart
For holy purpose, and like morning dew
Devotion fill'd the chalice of her heart.

She lived, she moved in dream intoxicate,
Under the influence of that powerful spell,
Like her of old who quaff'd the spring of fate,
The Pythoness of Delphic oracle.

VI.

Sometimes the father in Don Miguel's soul
Would fondly rise — and bitter tears would roll
Down his proud aspect: — on the mantling bloom
Of her young cheek he look'd, — the irrevocable doom
Which destined her yet living to the tomb,
Scarcely less lost to him than one inurn'd —
Burst on his mind, and there the anguish burn'd.
He gazed upon her form so fair and tall,
Modell'd in frame of antique statuary,
Round which her dress, the robe conventual,
Clung, — so the father thought, — like funeral pall.
But then he saw the spiritual pageantry,
The mitred rulers of the church, the train
Of nobles and high dames, whose ancestry
Rank'd with the best and proudest blood of Spain,
All thronging San Paolo's aisles of light,
To grace the hour of that most holy rite:

Heard the soft convent chaunt, the choral hymn,
Saw the red torchlight flare through incense dim;
And on *his* beauteous daughter's brows the crown
Of hallow'd flowers, by hallow'd hands press'd down;
And pride flash'd through his heart, *he* gave to Heaven
That gift by which his youthful sins were shriven.
Still linger'd in his home the young betroth'd,
In war's short respite, still the father sate
By the rich splendour of her beauty soothed,
And thus with holy confidence elate,
He deem'd not (it was strange) that other sighs
Trembled beneath those pious ecstasies.

VII.

Helena stood within the grove—her gaze
Was fix'd upon the sunset's purpling haze;
That tint was on her brow, the day's last blush
Shed on her glowing cheek its brilliant flush:
One arm was resting on the trellis'd bower,
The other hand in chisel'd beauty press'd
A holy reliquary to her breast.
There was a fatal influence in the hour,
The faint light linger'd on the orange-flower;

Upon its golden fruit that tint fell warm:
Who sleeps reclining on that bank of balm?
His deep eye closed, his brow serenely calm,
Like form in Grecian fable, Paris, or
Him whom sweet Galatæa loved of yore?
Upon that brow serene a slight red scar
Show'd that he was no stranger to the war;
If other proof were sought, one wounded arm
Slung in a silken kerchief, listless fell
Upon the bosom it had shielded well.
There was luxurious languor in each limb;
Helena turn'd from heaven, to gaze on him:
Like memory to the soul, or music's lull
He came, most glorious, and most beautiful!
"How like," thought she, "to the repose of death!"
She stoop'd, she half inhaled the slumberer's breath:
He dreams, perchance, of glorious deeds,—a tone
Melodiously escaped—a name—it was her own:
She started, paused, though yet but half undone.
He woke,—for then a long redundant tress
Of hers, half veiling her own loveliness,
Fell on his cheek.—"What angel sent thee here,
"With thy bright smile, my couch of pain to cheer?"

She blush'd, yet spoke not,—half retreating, flung
Her glance upon the earth,—fond accents hung
Upon her lip unutter'd; then there came
A sweet solicitude to hide her shame:
She press'd upon that lip, the silent sign,
She would not break again on his repose;
He cheek glow'd deeper than the Indian rose,
Her look was earthly all, and yet divine.

VIII.

Leontio rose,—Helena linger'd still:
He stood beside her,—was the eve so chill?
The hand he clasp'd was fever'd as his own,
But through her frame there stole a deathlike thrill;
The colour from her vermill'd lip had flown:
This was no place for one of sainted cell,
'Twas passion all, Leontio knew it well!
She had been gentle cherishing before,
And courteous ever,—but had been no more.

IX.

Long had he felt that she was lovely—felt
That hers were charms he had the power to melt;

But sensual as he was, a feeling yet,
A sentiment of honour, still remained:
He was her father's guest, and that restrain'd
His passion,—and he owed a deeper debt
To the old warrior:—then he knew her vow'd
To heaven from infancy;—and he was proud,
And valued high his name and noble birth,
To which hers was a thing of little worth.
And she was pure, and maiden virtue hath
A power to turn the lion from her path.
Her charms, they were not cast in common mould;
They were majestic, but not harsh nor bold;
She was surpassing tall; her floating hair
Was ring'd and glossy, and her temples fair:
She had her mother's wild Arabian eyes,
Temper'd with thoughts of her high destinies;
Had she been born a princess in the land,
Admiring bards had said, those eyes command.
Her lips were parted rubies,—on her cheek,
Blended with tint of Afric's ardent skies,
There was a hue like to the peachy streak
Scatter'd amidst the clouds when daylight dies,
Or bloom that on the wind-kiss'd myrtle lies.

X.

Then in her mind the chivalry of the Moor,
Refined to sweet enthusiasm, warmly dwelt;
She own'd the passions too of that wild shore,
Though in her heart they were as yet unfelt;
And she had all the ardour of those climes;
Which in her grandsire's veins arose to crimes.
Her hopes were not capricious, fleeting dreams,
She loved, she pray'd, she hated, in extremes;
Till now her soul had taken one only bent,
Alas! it fell in its idolatry;—
'Twas fix'd on heaven—'tis mortal now, and lent
To earthly love, but yet 'tis innocent.
How long, Leontio, 'tis for thee to will,
It shall remain in its first purity;
Thou art the arbiter—be generous still.
That eve within the grove was fraught with ill;
The veil removed, the weakness of her breast
Betray'd to light,—his triumph all the rest.
Love lit the splendour of her wandering eye;
Love in those pulses throbb'd tumultuously:
Already had his hopes attain'd their goal;
He was the load-star of the vestal's soul.

XI.

Oh! who shall fix the delicate lines, that keep
The bounds 'twixt love and passion's vortex deep?
Woman,—'tis not for thee,—devoted thing!
Whose very virtues are thy ruining.
Thy heart when launch'd a venture on the wave,
Soon founders on the smooth but treacherous coast;
The sage ones scoff, no hand is stretch'd to save,—
The fragile, fair, ill-fated bark is lost:
Man by the wreck is gainer,—thine the cost,—
He guiles thee by expressions, falseness all,—
Once let him feel his power, and thou must fall!

XII.

Air-wing'd the moments,—rapturous were the hours,
The vestal maid now pass'd within those bowers;
Not as of yore with book or rosary,
Or culling for the shrine their rarest flowers:
Leontio, monarch of her heart was nigh,
And he had power to make those hours speed on,
Till listening love believed not they were gone.
Skill'd in the lore of that romantic land,
His fancy framed it forth with magic wand:

Of deeds chivalrous, high, heroic, bold,
In lofty tone, and figured speech he told;
And passion—sovereign passion, glowing warm,
Gave to each varied tale it subtle charm.
At first Helena listen'd with alarm,
To theme and language fraught, she fear'd, with harm:
Oft as he spoke she felt the crimson creep
Upon her brow, and dye her bosom deep;
She could not meet that unconstrained look,
Which more than all the words he uttered spoke;
And while she felt the flame within her burn,
Would strive his wanderings heavenward all to turn.
But she had learnt things she could not unlearn;
And soon the poison crept into her mind,
And left its foul and withering blight behind.
To him no longer sung she convent chaunt,
Her hallow'd lute was tuned to old romaunt.
The hour, the clime, the grove, all redolent
With bloom, in this most dreamy luxury blent;
Commingling deep to fan their fatal flame,
Like the Medina wind that o'er them came. (3)
But oh! how dreadful were the gleams which yet
Came o'er Helena's heart, of keen regret;

There was a pang there which Leontio's love,
With all its blandishment could not remove.
Sparks of those holier feelings she had nursed,
Yet from their dying embers brightly burst.
Then shuddering, pale, she felt his arms entwine
Her form, once fair Religion's hallow'd shrine;
And with one bound, she from his clasp would start,
With all the force of virtue in her heart.

XIII.

But what infatuation lull'd to rest
Suspicion in her Spanish father's breast?
Was he with blind enthusiasm so elate,
That he believed her all immaculate?
'Twas strange, but it is true, he deem'd her vow
Froze up those tides in other hearts that glow;
'Twas pity all and heavenly charity
That brighten'd in her large up-gazing eye;
'Twas filial duty urged her thus to tend
Upon the wounded youth, her father's friend:
'Twas fit employ for votary of the cell,
'Twas well perform'd, and it became her well.
He knew not of those secret moments given
To earthly love, which he thought vow'd to heaven;

He mark'd Leontio's cheek, yet fever-flush'd,
Nor deem'd 'twas passion's burning tide that rush'd
Over its recent paleness — the excess,
The hectic of love's young voluptuousness —
Urged him to taste the evening's balmy air,
And gave him over to Helena's care.

XIV.

How full of bliss their mingling lives sped on!
Thrice had they mark'd the chaste and changeful moon
From crescent line to full round orb go down.
Leontio's frame its wonted strength regain'd,
Nought but the scars of those deep wounds remain'd:
But Helena — her brilliant eyes shone through
The snow-white curtain of her vestal veil,
Like lamp through shrine of marble — and they grew
Fearfully lustrous, and her cheek as pale:
Her breathing was but one deep struggling sigh,
Suppress'd to pain when scrutiny was nigh.
Still walk'd she with him in the grove — still bent,
Enamour'd, on his form her look intent;
And drank those tones telling now more than ever
Things which a vestal's ear should listen — never! —

But then the scene was changed, those days which wore
Away in rapture, soon must bless no more.
The tide of war returned, the weal of Spain
Recall'd her warriors to their ranks again.
Charles 'gainst the Gallic monarch fierce renew'd,
With light cause fann'd to hate, the deadly feud.
And there were partings in Seville's gay halls,
And mounting of proud pennons on her walls;
And young cheeks paled, and noble hearts unnerved,
But none through lust of love from duty swerved.
Red lips breathed kisses on departing breasts,
And farewell tokens gleam'd on towering crests;
And braids were clasp'd round many a manly arm,
Wrought with those holy names that shield from harm.

XV.

How met those tidings stern, young Helena?
She could have borne to see earth pass away,
Herself left in some boundless solitude,
Had *he* beside her in that chaos stood:
But he must to the fight — and she to dwell, —
Oh! how she loathed it now! — within the cell.
How loathed herself, the light, her passion — all,
Save him who caused her from her faith to fall.

She heard it in the grove, *he* told it her;
You had not seen one pulse or fibre stir,
And she was speechless, like to marble, or
Like her to whom such hate Latona bore:
And when her lips unclosed, you would have deem'd
She felt but coldly, or unwitting seem'd;
But her wide eyes fix'd on Leontio's face,
Look'd there as if in hopeless woe to trace
The depth, the extent of all her misery.
" And is it past?" she cried, " and thou and I
" No more may watch as now the daylight die:
" Leontio, is it past?" One ray was beaming
Through the dim tears that silently were streaming;
But it gleam'd bright and transient, and was gone:
He was still mute, his lips suppress'd their groan,
But that told all to her—the whole was known.

XVI.

Helena sat that eve within the grove;
The dews were bright beneath, the stars above;
Long had it pass'd the gorgeous sunset hour;
The bells were mute in San Francisco's tower;
The nightingale had pour'd her vesper song;
The breeze the sleeping roses died among.

Still fitful came a cadence sweetly grave,
Of holy music o'er the tranquil wave;
But soon that ceased, each tremulous peal of sound,
In the wide dome of space extinction found.
The balm of flowers was round her — other eye
Than hers, the priestess of the night, who shone
So meek, and flung her soft effulgence down
Upon the tube-rose and anemone,
There was none on her — she sat there alone,
Nor animate thing, nor earthly one was nigh.
The place was all religion, and imbued
Her spirit with its tone; as though the sigh
Of some pure soul then soaring to the sky,
Ere its blest pinion sought the realms above,
Came there to sanctify her solitude;
And piety with human weakness strove
Till her heart shudder'd at its fatal love.
The present was all loneliness — the past
Arose a guilty but seductive dream —
The future to her mental view did seem
A gloomy sky with clouds of wrath o'ercast.
A spell was on her lip, and o'er her brain,
She tried to pray, but raised her voice in vain.

XVII.

Her light had turn'd to darkness — her large eye
Had lost its radiance of eternity:
'Twas not that passion with its earth-born ray
Had dimm'd her lustre, sapp'd her loveliness;
But it had dash'd that holiest charm away,
That look of the inspired Pythoness,
That glorious beaming of unsullied mind,
That look of dignity with hope combined,
That glance, wherein if we discover aught
Of pride, it seems th' enthusiast flash of thought —
The vast intelligence that breathes the whole
High burst of eloquence which fills the soul.
These she had lost, — she knew, deplored it all,
Yet clung more close to him who made her fall.
She thought on those sweet moments shining far
O'er memory's waste, like some departing star,
Or as the moon-ray's hallowing light that play'd
In lambent lines of silver mid the shade.
She thought on those sweet hours, when, in the hush
Of cloister'd stillness, she had felt the gush

Of piety in her heart, and had knelt down
Before the shrine, where the rich haze that stream'd
On her through that high window seem'd to crown
Her forehead with the halo of a saint;
A flush of rose and ruby, o'er which gleam'd
Rays golden, midst the amber hues more faint;
And with clasp'd hands did dedicate to God
Her young pure life. Or when in pride she trod,
Amid her sister votaries, the aisle,
Her features bright with a celestial smile;
Or raised her voice in the full choir, and felt
Devotion into music richly melt;
Received the dear caress — obey'd the call
To early matin or confessional;
Though her calm days, in deep seclusion spent,
Had little to reveal or to repent.

XVIII.

Days thus she struggled on. She shunn'd, then sought
His baneful sight, to save her from the thought
How they must part for ever! He beheld
The ruin of her heart — the conflict there —
The passionate thoughts 'gainst reason that rebell'd —
The proud form wasting in its mute despair —
The spirit to endure — the will to dare:

The talisman of virtue fall away
He mark'd, and seized on his devoted prey.
He vow'd eternal love, and she believed,
Or strove with fond deceit to be deceived.
She knew, alas! too late, that she had lost
All a high-minded woman values most;
Her Christian hope, — her own — the world's esteem,
Which in that hour did doubly precious seem, —
And that blest thought, from infancy her pride,
Of being of heaven the consecrated bride.

XIX.

Oh, ruin of all excellence! The first
(Seraphic as they were, now how accurst)
Who fell from glory, like rays round the sun
Stood most resplendent near that Mightiest One! —
Sweet chords of harps, o'ertuned by some bold hand
To tones of fullest compass, wild and high,
While swelling into cadence proudly grand,
Perish in their excess of melody.
Thus our best feelings, those that give the charm
To life's drear paths, to fiction colouring warm,
Become in their abuse a vortex deep,
Drowning our virtues in their reckless sweep:

Thus the heart's fond devotion turns to sin,
Even while its source is springing pure within.
The apathetic and the heartless crawl
In their dull round, unscann'd, unloved by all;
While they of higher natures, sons of light,
Fall by one fatal plunge to endless night!

XX.

The morning came — oh! how the early sun
Glared on her now — so late the vestal one!
She could not meet the searching light that broke
Upon her couch, when glorious morn awoke:
The holy matin hymn was silent now;
The flowers had droop'd on the Madonna's brow;
She dared not kneel at her all-hallow'd feet,
Nor holy *aves* at her shrine repeat;
She dared not raise her prayer to saint above,
But the loud trumpet waked her earthly love.
She heard the muster in the Almeda near,
And saw the banners borne upon the air.
Then through her father's halls tumultuous ran
The serfs, and fill'd the ample zaguan; (4)
She gazed upon them from the corridore,
She hoped, yet fear'd, to see *his* form once more.

That baneful star in her now clouded sky,
That worshipp'd god of her idolatry!
But how could she upon her father's face
Gaze now — how meet his trusting kind embrace?
He came — he kiss'd her brow — 'twas crimsoned;
He spoke the benediction o'er her head:
Upon his own the polish'd helm did shine.
Leontio waved to her one parting sign —
She answer'd it with wild and wan farewell,
Then, guilt-stain'd, shrunk within the shrouding cell.

END OF CANTO FIRST.

CANTO SECOND.

'Tis now the common talk, the news of the world;
False to Statira, false to her that loved him;
And took him bathed all o'er in Persian blood—
Kiss'd the dear cruel wounds, and wash'd them o'er
And o'er in tears—then bound them with my hair.

The Rival Queens.

I.

THERE is a sound of joy in proud Seville,
Hush'd is the war-trump on the Gallic shore;
St. Francis' bells ring out a gladdening peal,
The Almeda boasts its gallant shows once more:
The Spanish knights with eager haste return'd
To wear the laurels they had bravely earn'd.
The city is one jubilee prolong'd
Throughout the live-long day and summer night;
Her streets, and squares, and porticos are throng'd
With all that's gorgeous, glittering, brave, and bright.
When day had fled, eve dawn'd her rival light,

With lamps scarce less resplendent than the sun,
Flower-wreathed, and stain'd of various hues, which shone
Upon the motley groups enchantment down.
From tower and steeple, roof and balcony,
Hung costly tapestries wove in curious loom;
O'er which, as the high symbol pass'd them by,
Fair hands flung incense down and rich perfume.
Altars of state were rear'd in every square,
Where you might see the devotees at prayer;
Mirth mix'd in contrast strange with piety,
And cries of *Dios*, with shouts of victory.
And there were harpings heard in princely halls,
Revels, and masques, and midnight festivals;
And barges on the river, and gay groups
Loitering at evening on its verdant slopes;
With song and serenade, and vows that bring
Blushes upon young cheeks more rich than Spring.
Time in the roseate tide droop'd down his wing,
And for a space forgot his hoary frown;
Mars in his orbit turn'd all passion-pale,
Nor gleam'd, as he had done, portentous down:
Whilst she, the queen of love and languishment,
Smiled on the scene through eve's refulgent veil,
And with the light of lamps, her lustre blent.

II.

But there are other sounds in proud Seville!
In cloister'd shades, pale forms are seen to steal,
Darkly envelop'd in their weeds of woe;
Widows and orphan maids, to whom the strain
Of mirth comes like a mockery of their pain,
A doleful knell, a deep, heart-stricken blow!
Their sires and sons lie on the Italian plain,
In grave unhallow'd, or uncoffin'd there:
What though the meed of praise and gratitude
Burst through that gloom?—grief hath for praise no ear:
It comes a cruel spectre to intrude,
Startles,—but it hath not the power to cheer,
The voice that rears to heaven the honour'd name
Syllables an empty sound—like urns which bear
The pompous records of some hero's fame,
Whose dust far off is scatter'd to the air.

III.

So came that sound to thy heart, Helena!
Like fire from heaven that sears the hope of earth—
Thou heardst that thou wert orphan'd on that day
Which gave to Seville its proud cause of mirth.

She heard that he died nobly,—that he fell
Gloriously for the land he loved so well!
His name amidst the loftiest proudly rang,—
She heard it—High Heaven! and she bless'd thee then,
Amidst her anguish,—that her sire was ta'en
Away by death, and spared a deeper pang.
Oh dreadful desolation!—when the mind
Hath sunk so deep in guilt, that it can find
In sorrow but one solace—and that *one*
In the wild thought of being in shame alone!
Unlike the piety that sees consign'd
The loved one to the tomb, with heart resign'd:
Never could she that awful frown have faced
Which must have met her soon—renounced—disgraced.
Thus wail'd the daughter o'er the father dead,
" 'Tis past—the day of bitterness hath fled!
" Oh! better far to mourn thee, as I mourn—
" Than be at once thy stigma and thy scorn."

IV.

No tidings of Leontio came,—no brief
But sweet assurance that he lived, and loved
Her still:—she linger'd on in grief:

And her vague fears would deem him dead, and left
Upon the field,—of holy rite bereft;
With but the shreds of its mortality
Marring the symmetry of that fine form,
The banquet now of the foul loathsome worm:
And that black, beautiful, and beaming eye,
Which wont to gaze on her so passionately,
Closed up for ever! Then her heart would burn
With jealous fever;—not—oh! not for her
Was his all proud and glorious return!
He deem'd but lightly of a heart soon won;
His changeful nature, would it not prefer
Some bride of taintless name, some peerless one?
This was the grief of griefs—her mind was driven
From human sympathy, and trust in Heaven.

V.

Oh! to have seen that ghastly mourner there,
And burst again upon the city's glare,
'Twould seem as if from out the silent grave
You sudden rush'd into the world's full wave!
There was no wearying in their joy,—no pause
In their diversion. Seville's favourite sport,
To which her great and gay in crowds resort,
Was welcomed with its wonted loud applause;

All to the arena rush'd, noble and artizan,
And cries of "*Toro*" through the city ran,
In eager expectation of the affray
That makes in Spain her proudest holiday.
And dames whose delicate charms the shading fan
Veils from the bold obtrusive gaze of man,
Flock to the blood-stain'd ground to feast their eyes
Upon the dying bull's last agonies;
With waving kerchiefs and mantillas white
Urge on the brutal sport and cheer the fight.
Enough of this,—in me 'twere worse than bold
To pen a scene already finely told;
Enough for me, if I but briefly say,
How one young knight the laurels bore away:
Envy he was of dexterous Matadore,
The admired of all—the hero of the day:
The black Montera cap with plume he wore, (5)
And doublet of light silk, whose ample sleeve,
Pendent with knobs of gold and interlaced
With brilliant bands, his manly shoulders graced.
Low in his saddle bow'd he to receive
The lavish plaudits of the multitude,
Which ever and anon were wild renew'd;
The Banderilla in his hand remain'd, (6)
Rent in the recent fight, and crimson-stain'd;

The flush of conquest linger'd on his brow,
And spread upon his cheek a brilliant glow.
'Twas strange that he—the load-star of all eyes—
The love of ladies' hearts, whose fluttering sighs
Lifted their snowy veils,—'twas strange that he,
With crest bow'd down in grateful courtesy,
Should break away from their admiring sight,
And leave them lost in wonder and delight.
'Twas wisely done,—the gallant left behind
A dreamy mystery, sweet and undefined;
The Cavaleros swore he was a Moor
Whom they had often mark'd as Picadore; (7)
The gentler ladies deem'd him heaven-descended,
A youth in whom each grace and charm was blended;
Raved of him for an hour—when that was o'er
Forgot him quite—and so the wonder ended.

VI.

The crowds are clear'd—the arena stands alone,—
The bloody scite of bloody pageants gone.
The dames depart to grove and cool saloon,
To taste the slumber of the burning noon;
The knights to novel mirth and gallant play,
Jesting with charlatan, or cyprian gay;

But he,— Leontio, toward the suburb stray'd,
Weary and listless from that morn's parade;
In fickle mood, vex'd by a voice within,
Which told him of his perfidy and sin.
He roam'd beside the Guadalquiver's flood,
Where Miguel's dwelling, dark and lonely stood;
He thought of Helena — the spot — the bowers —
The perfume wafted from her favourite flowers —
All brought back memory of those blissful hours,
Which he had pass'd with her. How innocent
She was, when there he first gazed on her, — how
Ere her heart took from his its earthward bent,
Mantled, at the least glance of his, the glow
Upon her beauteous cheek and vestal brow.
Then dwelt he on each trait of tenderness,
By which she sought to make his anguish less.
How she had watch'd him with solicitude
Which might have won a Cynic's gratitude:
How she had loved him! 'Twas not maidenly
To gaze as she had gazed, with rapturous eye;
But 'twas a crime *he* well might have forgiven,
For whom she had forsaken fame and heaven!
A pang came o'er him then, — remorseful came:
On whom had he cast such a brand of shame?

On one who in the battle's heat had strode
Fearless before him, turning death away
Awe-struck,—to him such debt he owed,
As he could never, even with life, repay:
He had been cherish'd in his home and heart,
From whence 'twas but his pleasure to depart;
He knew that he had turn'd a scorpion there,
Filling that home with sorrow and despair.
True,—he had sought to pay it back again,
That debt of life, on the ensanguined plain;
Fought o'er Don Miguel, when he bleeding fell,
To shield him from his doom had striven well;
And search'd with filial duty for the Leech,
Who came, and tried his healing art in vain!
The death-wound had gone deeper than his reach;
Don Miguel like the Theban smiled serene,
Rejoicing in the glory he had seen! (8)
And summoning, faint, Leontio to his side,
The brave old warrior bless'd him e'er he died:
And pointing heavenward,—then toward distant Spain,
He said—"I have a peerless treasure there,
"Whose young pure life and whose all-hallow'd prayer
"Will for my spirit yonder entrance gain:

" Oh! brave young man,—it is a blessed thing,
" When life and soul like mine are on the wing,
" To think that there is one whose tears shall win
" From Christ a pardon for her father's sin.
" Nor dearer was that hour, when to my arms
" I first received her mother's blushing charms,
" Than this, when lo! my spirit pants to prove
" The sweet hope resting on her duteous love!"

VII.

These were the last words of the dying man,—
He spake no more. An icy shudder ran
Throughout Leontio's frame,—then—then she felt
Though transient, yet most keen—the sting of guilt!
Now it return'd on him,—those scutcheon'd walls
On which he look'd,—those tenantless dull halls,
Through which no longer joyous menials roam
To hail with honest love their master home,
Awaken'd in his heart the daughter's doom,
The sire's last words, half utter'd from the tomb.
He bared his brow,—'twas fever'd with the train
Of thought, which had rush'd wildly through his brain:
Once more he'd seek her in her convent's gloom,

Yet why behold her more?—in him 'twere sin
To blend his line with Moorish origin;
And he must forfeit his ancestral pride,
The world's renown and high-born hopes beside:
He knew that she with him would seek those climes,
Whose liberal laws deem lightly of such crimes;
But was her love worth such a sacrifice?
Yet would he once more seek her in the cell,—
Rash girl, why did she love him—thus—too well!
Such were Leontio's musings, such the guise
In which his comrades found him,—some did jest,
And liken him to love-lorn knight distrest,
That he did linger in deserted woods,
And tread with listless step dull solitudes,
While in the city all was mirth and song;
Thus laugh'd they as they led him to the throng:
He brook'd not well their theme of mirth to be,
And check'd the tide of ill-timed raillery;
Resumed his wonted gallantry of mien,
And sought with them each gay and splendid scene.

VIII.

'Twas near Valasco's palace that they stray'd:
There came a sound of martial music, play'd
Within its princely courts,—the lofty tone
Accorded with its name and high renown.
Don Raymond de Valasco! well 'twas known,
That name throughout the records of the land,
Free from all foreign taint or Moorish brand,
The purest, noblest blood of proud Castile,
Long cherish'd there, e'er nurtured in Seville:
Oft had it mix'd with that of royal line,
Which tends too oft to tarnish, not refine.
The faded lustre of Castilia's crown
Still in their bearings bold they handed down.
Don Raymond traced his ancient lineage high,
With all the pride of regal ancestry;
His princely sires had struggled through that time,
When Spain was lost by lustful Roderick's crime;
When she,—the second Helen—Cava's charms,
Plunged Spain in blood, and roused a host to arms:
His sires had stood upon those glorious heights,
When Spain asserted and redeem'd her rights;

Had seen the Crescent wane, the Red-cross wave
O'er many a Moslem hero's mountain grave,
Who died to glut the ground he could not save!
That name,—the halo of great glories gone,
In two fair daughters now concentred lies;
In youth Valasco mourn'd his infant son,
But lived to see two virgin scions rise.

IX.

They stood, like two twin-stars of light—between
Their mother and their sire,—in raiment sheen
With gold and jewels—canopied o'er-head
By velvet dome, which on their beauty shed
A bloom like ruby-ray on orient pearl:
The wide Pateo, cloister'd on each side
By pillar'd arches of heraldic pride,
Each capital'd by crest of duke or earl,
Display'd a gorgeous group of gallants,—who
Eagerly press'd, with forehead bending low
And plume down droop'd, and capa's fluttering fold
Beset with gems and bright with inwrought gold,
To greet Valasco's daughters;—with them came
Leontio, and with courteous air he bow'd
To the old lord and to his lady proud;

Then lifted he his gaze to hail the sight
That fill'd that brave assembly with delight.
They stood in balcony upraised, and bright
With gilded latticery all wreathed with rose;
And Spain's fair olive branch was interwined
With every flower within her vales that grows;
And those more gorgeous from the Tropic's glare,
Gave out their sweets, and cluster'd glorious there.
The banner of Castile waved wide above,
With that of Seville gracefully combined;
Beneath, in the broad square, amidst a grove
Where spread the palm and lemon's mingling shade,
A fountain in its marble basin play'd,
Shooting forth jets of foam, which were again
Gorged by bronzed dolphins girt with golden train;
And on that day of joy, the monsters were
Regaled with perfumed waters, rich and rare.

X.

Proud, at her sire's right hand, young Clara stood,
Elate in all the pomp of noble blood;
Like her who sat beside Olympian Jove,
When heaven did homage to the queen of love.

Her brow was arch'd and fine — her towering height
Might well assert her claims and regal right;
She look'd down calmly on the crowd, and stoop'd
Her swan-like neck, until her ringlets droop'd
Like a dark veil around her; — then with pride
She flung them back, and was erect again.
Meek, trembling, at her elder sister's side,
Sweet Inez stood—and strove, but all in vain,
Her beauty from the gaze of man to hide;
Her delicate arms with diamond circlets blazed;
One ivory hand she half unconscious raised,
And drew in closer folds the embroider'd veil,
To screen those charms admiring gallants praised;
Her shaded brow, and cheek so fair and pale,
Brought that most beauteous emblem to the mind,
The pearl-white lily in its leaf enshrined.
Her blush — unlike the full and brilliant glow
Which pleasure painted on her sister's brow,
Was faint and fleeting, emanating warm
From the pure soul within — her highest charm.
She was in youth's first bloom, her azure zone
Scarce girdled in a more than girlish form,
Nor had even yet her fifteenth summer flown:

She watch'd her mother's fond approving eye,
With soft confiding look of infancy,
And hand lock'd in her sister's, — thus she stood
Portraying all that's innocent and good.

XI.

On her at once was fix'd Leontio's gaze,
His joy was mute, he had no word of praise;
But he look'd on her — young and delicate,
As she stood there — with eyes he could not sate.
She was the vision glowing warm with life,
Which he had seen when his young heart was rife
With most delicious fantasies — to whom,
In the soul's rich devotion, then he felt
He could have turn'd idolatrous, and have knelt.
He thought no more of her in cloister'd gloom;
But with its sweet intensity oppress'd,
Rush'd forth with this new passion in his breast.

XII.

That night there was a masque and splendid fête
Held in Valasco's palace. All Seville
Whose names were rank'd amongst the high and great,
Flock'd there to tread the dance on jocund heel:
And there were nobles from the far Xenil;

Some from Madrid, and Cadiz, sea-girt town;
Valencia's knights of unimpeach'd renown,
And proud Biscayen lords, whose sounding fame
Might kindred with Valasco's house yet claim.
But that high fête, 'twas chiefly held for those
Who lately had subdued their Gallic foes.
The halls were wreathed with eglantine and rose,
Narcissus pale and hyacinth's deep blue,
Fair jasmine and carnation's blended hue;
And there was wreathed in that most rare festoon
The passion-flower with its pale silvery moon;
There, Juno's favourite Iris glisten'd — and
The amber jonquille on her emerald wand;
And empress of the wreath, the expanding globe
Of the striped tulip shed a brilliant glow
Upon the tessellated floor below,
Rich as the splendour of a marriage robe;
Nor was it nature's hues alone that bloom'd,
Inventive fancy had its bell illumed;
Which, like some lamp in wild Arabian tale,
Gleam'd ruby on the lily's virgin veil.
Carpets were spread in moon-lit balconies,
Curtain'd with silks of intermingling dyes;
And circling tents rose in those gardens fair,
Lighted by girandoles and torches' glare;

Or painted lamps, which through their gauzy shade
Gleam'd moon-like down upon the orange-glade;
Whilst in the sky above, the blue stars shone
With a calm spiritual lustre, all their own.
A light for lovers and for poets meet,
When they seek out some lone all-hush'd retreat,
And muse away the hours in dreamy bliss,
Enamour'd of their own thoughts loveliness.
There was not aught which might delight the mind,
Or charm the sense, there that you did not find;
And music — dear delicious music — stole
Through every bower and crept into the soul.
'Twas like the Alhambra's gorgeous days of old,
Or like that rare and sumptuous paradise
Which, in Arabian legends we are told,
The impious Shedad framed for mortal eyes,
Deep in the desert.
Soon the halls were fill'd
With motley masquers — some as warriors bold,
Some cabalists in divinations skill'd;
Moslems with turban'd brows and tawny arms,
And nuns who half unveil'd their vestal charms;
And sweet sultanas, and tiara'd queens,
Moved proudly through these fair enchanted scenes.

XIII.

Leontio wander'd there with heart all wild
To meet again Valasco's beauteous child;
Twice had he seen her slight form gliding by,
But she had shunn'd his passing courtesy.
The Psyche of the Grecian fable she, —
'Twas chosen well — that sweet disguise, and bright
She look'd, in robe of silver tissue dight,
With floating tress of darkest auburn hair
Fanning the beauty of a breast as fair
As ever was enclasp'd by jewel'd zone;
And then her voice! — its sweet pathetic tone
Which might, like Orpheus' harp, the senses win,
Breathed the pure secret of the soul within.

XIV.

He sought her in saloon and high alcove;
Oh! for the azure wings of heaven-born love!
But she — his Psyche, ever and anon
When he believed her in his grasp, was gone.
He caught faint glimpses of her, like the light
That wanders on the wave, then mocks our sight.

At length fate favour'd him — his steps were led
By the sweet sound of voices, to a glade
Of ripening olives, cluster'd over head
By the rich drapery of the vine, a shade
Befitting well the fair group it display'd.
Valasco's heirs, its centre — near them stood
Three Cavaleros brave, in listening mood;
With plumed cap in hand, and eye intent
Fix'd on the lovely sisters, o'er whom bent
Their lady mother — and reclined around
Were high-born dames, with bright tiaras crown'd.
The Donna Clara touch'd her gold-wrought lute;
Sweet Inez' breath was hush'd, her lip was mute:
The harp was tuned — it had been slightly strung,
But she was skill'd who woke its music — and
The wandering tones obey'd her queenly hand;
One glance upon the list'ning group she flung,
Then with rich dulcet voice the lady sung.

XV.

The lay was simple — of a Moorish maid
The daughter of Granada's pagan king,
In days gone by, when groves were rife with spring,
Who left her father's halls, and wanton stray'd

With one of fickle faith, a renegade.
Her hand, it wore alas! no nuptial ring;
Brief was their bliss, and toilsome was their flight
Which led at last to Archedona's height:
They look'd before — the hills were rude and bare;
They look'd behind — a cloud of dust was there;
And soon their eyes Granada's horsemen hail,
Their proud array lies glittering in the vale;
There is but one way left, one refuge now
From a sire's hate, a monarch's awful frown;
She took a wild adieu, that gentle Moor
Flung round her lover's form her arms secure,
And with him in that clasp leap'd frantic down;
Finding a faithful marriage-bed below.
That height is named on which their lives were shed,
"The Lovers' Rock" — in memory of the dead.

XVI.

The strain had ceased — 'twas sweetly sung — a thrill
Upon the heart vibrated sadly still.
Leontio's look was fix'd on Inez — he
Had seen what fill'd his soul with ecstasy.

In the fair minstrel's ringlets wreathed had been
Her snowy hand — her smile at first serene
On Clara beam'd, then brighten'd into joy,
Which soon was blended with a sweet alloy:
Her bosom heaved above its glittering screen:
And as the tale in deeper pathos grew,
Her cheeks shone like twin-roses steep'd in dew.
Then — as the ice-gem on the violet's blue
In the warm summer sunshine melts away —
She from her soft eye dash'd the glittering spray.

XVII.

That eye met his, impearled as it was,
And he return'd its sweet reposing gaze
With one of passion — for a dark eye has
A warm expression, and its light conveys
More in one look than eye of colder hue,
With all its sapphirine radiance, can in two.
Inez' were dove-like hazel, form'd to melt —
She felt his glance upon her — ay she felt
Even deep within her that soul-stirring glance,
And her heart yielded to its power at once.

XVIII.

The fête wore on — the masquers droop'd, and soon
The harping ceased in bower and bright saloon;
'Twas glorious, but 'twas past — the dawning day
Beheld it like enchantment fleet away.
Sweet Inez! blissful were thy morning dreams,
A fairy world dawn'd on thee its fair gleams;
He came to thee in slumber — he whose art
Had waked the virgin passion of thy heart.
There was a smile upon thy sleeping brow,
And on thy cheek a rich unusual glow;
Then, o'er thee had thy stern duenna hung,
She had heard syllabled by thy soft tongue
Leontio's name; — 'twas well she did not hear,
For it had grated on her saintly ear:
I know none such who bear it, nor of yore,
Amongst the saints — who such appellative bore.
The lady dream'd she wander'd in a grove,
He was beside her — much sweet converse there
They had — at last he spoke to her of love!
They were far distant from the gala's glare,
There was a glory in the sky above
Mocking all dull realities — the air

Was floating amaranth, breathing in each sigh
That wanton'd o'er them — matchless melody.
She saw him in that vision — beautiful
As the bright sons of heaven — his accents bland
Like sound of sparry fountain seem'd to lull;
She felt the passionate pressure of his hand
Warmly on hers — he named her — oh! that tone
It waked her, but its music was not mute,
Real and earthly, lingering it remain'd,
'Twas the wild warbling of an air-touch'd lute:
She rose — the strain was hush'd — the vision gone —
She look'd upon the flower-wreaths wearing wan.

XIX.

But she had that within her glowing bright
Which made all round an atmosphere of light;
She dwelt in fairer regions — her world was
Like scene depicted on some magic glass,
Or blest Elysium: — she knew nought of pain,
Or 'twas so sweet it came to her like rain
Softening the glories of a summer plain.
'Twas the sweet pain of loving — only once
There dawn'd a feeling in her young pure breast,
That its idolatry should be suppress'd.

And much she mused and ponder'd, and some plea
Always arose for that idolatry:
It made her, oh! so blissful, and she felt,
When at the Virgin's shrine in prayer she knelt —
Devotion in her heart more warmly melt.
Never was Clara half so dear before,
And day by day she loved her parents more:
And how she loved Leontio! Her young mind
Was like to precious amber, it enshrined
As amber doth — not the rich gems of earth,
But, in their stead, a thing of little worth.

XX.

She deem'd him faultless — she knew nought of sin,
There was none her own gentle heart within;
She felt his beauty, and her fancy framed
A soul—such form might well have graced and claim'd.
She in chivalrous tales had eager read
Of knights, whose valour hew'd whole armies down;
Whose faith and virtue all unvanquished,
On their brave deeds, shed even more fair renown.
'Twas once the gallant boast of proud Castile,
That in the fight her sons were like their steel,

But wax became in ladies' company:
Such Inez deem'd her love. As suitor he
Now boldly came — his suit was countenanced
By the old Don — who liked his pedigree,
And thought his fortunes might be much advanced.

XXI.

'Twas not as it with Helena had been,
His wooing now — it was an alter'd scene.
No secret meetings in the twilight grove,
Where two fond hearts might be alone with love;
No passionate vows breathed solely for one ear,
Uncheck'd by prying page, or matron near.
'Twas Spanish etiquette that Love should be
Divested of his heathenish mystery;
'Twas order'd all by rule: — the boy thus shorn
Of his old birthright — walk'd quite soberly,
With drooping wings and bow — or haply borne
In by a train of she-inquisitors,
Whose years had long been multiplied to scores.
It is a politic custom, and conspires,
More than men think, to fan internal fires.

A smile — a look — the hand's least tremulous touch —
A tender word, almost unconscious spoken,
Seems to the lover, Love's most precious token,
Is prized and ponder'd on by him as such.
Leontio lived on looks! — sometimes a song
Became the medium of his passion — or
A flower would serve him as expression strong;
And books supplied to him a goodly store.
But dearest were those hours, though brief and bright
As tropic twilight — when that darling maid
He — as the scene became all hush'd in night —
Did on his lute most sweetly serenade.
He watch'd her chamber window, with a hope
Like to the pilgrim's, who from darksome glade
Looks toward the east, and sees her portals ope,
Slowly before the yet half-slumbering moon:
So came she forth — the lady of his lay —
Moon-like, in sweet and negligent array;
With sweeping veil, and tresses drooping down
Over the balcony, and eyes that beam'd
Like the fond Capulet's, all languishment;
Which as he gazed on, lover-like, he deem'd
Bright wandering stars from heaven's own firmament.

His minstrel meed — the bracelet's glittering band,
Or silken glove drawn from that fairy hand;
Which half-extended woo'd the rapturous kiss,
Imprinted on its matchless loveliness.

XXII.

Leontio thought of Helena no more!
Or thought — and sicken'd as the past came o'er
His mind — 'twere well if she were in her grave;
Or well, if from the deep oblivious wave
Of Lethe — both could quaff, and drown their shame.
But from the Italian shore a spectre came,
Scaring in noonday light his mirthful mood;
The phantom told him of a tarnish'd name,
Of broken vows, and base ingratitude!
He flew from it to Inez — but even there
The shade pursued — then to the banquet's glare
He hied him, and with song and flowing bowl
Drove forth the haunting vision from his soul!

XXIII.

'Twas soon spread through the city far and wide
That Inez was to blush Leontio's bride.

The young rejoiced in hope of masques and balls,
The old expected marriage festivals.
It reach'd Helena's ear — 'twas even-tide
When that sound smote her. — Through the dusky cell
The parting light in lessening glimmers fell.
She sat half veil'd in darkness — it was well
They did not mark her wan and bloodless cheek —
Lips parch'd with the hot words they could not speak.
She did not swoon, but sat with glassy eye,
And shivering frame, and when the pang had pass'd,
And the sob struggled from her heart at last,
Denied with jeer the tale's reality —
The idle rumour of an idle town,
Or true, or false, alike indifferent
To one whose mind on other thoughts was bent;
With this she prayed them briefly to be gone,
And leave her there to meditate alone.
To meditate! — ay, 'twas no vain pretence
Which drove those prating prying sisters thence;
There was a voice within her that confirm'd
The tale they told her — spectre of her dreams!
Long had it haunted her, but lingering gleams
Of hope came to her heart, when evening hours
Brought back the memory of her twilight bowers:

Could he alone forget them? — surely he
Would feel like her their stirring memory!
But now — 'twas past! — hope sunk for aye entomb'd,
Those phantoms all reality assumed;
He had abandon'd her despite his vow,
The hour was come — hers must be heeded now!
The hour was come! she was renounced — disgraced —
Branded with shame which might not be effaced:
The vengeance of the Moor — the pride of Spain,
Met in her heart, and madden'd every vein;
And there was mingled there, in every thrill,
That crowning anguish — how she loved him still!
Match me — ye records vast of human grief,
By fiction framed, or stern truth register'd,
Surpassing, men might say, their calm belief,
Match me with this — and if ye have a word
Speaking in light'nings, hither bring its aid,
To paint the horrors of a heart betray'd;
A woman's heart — extreme in love and hate,
Left by the worshipp'd spoiler — desolate!
If man receives from man the insult dire,
He turns on him and slays him in his ire;
If woman frets him, from her frown he flies
And seeks his solace in her rival's eyes;

But who is her avenger? — who, when she
Has cause of wrath, resents her injury?
Not her own hand — 'tis honour in the strong,
But murder when the weak revenge their wrong;
The world but leaves her this, by wave, or bowl,
To burst the bonds of its unjust control:
Or linger on beneath its withering sneer,
Till the heart breaks on its untimely bier!
Thus felt lost Helena. — The night wore on,
And dawn'd upon her griefs the morning sun.
She sat with ghastly look — her brow yet proud,
For even in anguish was her soul unbow'd.
The deep convulsive throbbing of her breast
Heaved the dark drapery of her shroud-like vest;
'Twas meet for marriage robe! — She laugh'd in scorn:
To-morrow's sun would hail his nuptial morn;
To San Paolo's shrine the train would come —
Up sprung she from her seat, as if despair
Had broke the marble spell — or from the tomb
The dead had risen to hear their final doom:
With one wild shriek which rent the startled air,
She cried, "Leontio! — I will greet thee there!"

XXIV.

That bridal day was fix'd — the tale was true,
Within the palace moved a busy throng;
And beaming eyes to brighter lustre grew,
And silvery voices were attuned to song:
Time, on his wings of downy plumage flew,
But young Love laugh'd and thought he tarried long.
Valasco's lands lay wide—the Guadian wave
Did his rich olive grounds and pastures lave;
There, in the shelter of coeval trees
Rose his ancestral hall — its battlements,
Clothed in the vine's delicious draperies,
Rear'd to the sun their war, and time-worn rents,
And look'd out proudly to the distant seas.
The serfs were glad throughout that fair domain,
Their eyes would soon behold the marriage train,
So came the news that blessed even-tide:
And much they wish'd for those fast-nearing hours,
When their loved lord, and Don Leontio's bride,
Should greet them in their long-deserted towers.
The vales were rich in their autumnal pride,
The orange-ripen'd midst its clustering flowers,

The golden grain repaid their summer toil,
The olive-press gave out its limpid oil,
Broad in the sun the rich tomato glow'd,
The luscious fig dropp'd from its leafy shade,
The downy peach its ripe vermilion show'd,
The gourd lay yellow in the garden glade;
'Twould give them glorious welcome. A young group
Of peasant girls, the fairest of their troop,
Cull'd from the groves all blossoms there that spring,
Before the footsteps of the bride to fling.

XXV.

Leontio pass'd that day with Inez;—she
Lived in a trance of painful ecstasy;
She was about to quit that sheltering home,
Which had beheld her happy childhood bloom;
To enter on the world's throng'd stage—to act,
So deem'd she then—so her Duenna told—
The high-born matron, grave, sedate, and cold:
And other fears her virgin bosom rack'd,
Known but to maidens sensitive and meek;
And half she wish'd sometimes, she could retract,
And the tear trembled on her pure pale cheek;

But she look'd on Leontio, and the charm
Of her young fondness came upon her warm;
And, yielding to its luxury, it stole
Through every fibre of her melting soul.
He—wild voluptuary—dream'd of coming bliss,
I would not image forth such dreams as his,
Nor rob the boy-god of his mystic veil,
To prove the just portraying of my tale.
'Twas evening e'er they parted, and they took
A sweet adieu, as though the morrow were
To sever, not unite them. On the fair
Mild face of Inez, still Leontio's look
Linger'd enraptured. Have ye not oft seen
When the moon sets in spring time most serene,
A light cloud veil her?—so o'er Inez came
A shade—her soft and beaming countenance,
As by some sad thought's dark eclipse, became
All tearful and all sorrow-struck at once.
'Twas—so Leontio deem'd—her delicate mind
O'er-wrought with varied feelings, undefined;
It shed new grace around her and he loved
To see her gentle spirit strongly moved.

XXVI.

He hasten'd to his home.—The hour grew late,—
Glow'd in the sky the full meridian moon,
'Twas like, in northern climes, their noon-day sun;
The wind came laden with a burning freight,
For it blew hotly from Tetuan's shore,
And wafted all its feverish languor o'er.
Leontio threw his cumbering cloak aside,
From gold-wrought net, his captive locks untied,
And on his couch, in silken robe bedight,
Reclined in luxury of a southern night.
All noise was hush'd—there was no sound save when
The embroider'd blinds flapp'd heavily,—and then
A hum from the unslumbering city rush'd
Through that fair chamber, and again was hush'd:
And with it came the rich o'erpowering scent
Of the young orange bloom with jasmine blent.
He lay entranced—the fascination fell
Upon his mind, and bound him in its spell.
How fate had lavish'd on him her fond smiles,
How well had prosper'd all his artful wiles;
To-morrow—and what noble of the land
In brighter prospects than his own would stand?

High in his monarch's favour — high in fame, —
Power, at the touch of wealth's all magic wand;
His lady's beauty and illustrious name,
A dowry in themselves, which doubtless might
Insure all other honours as a right.
He sat, with pride the inmate of his breast,
Like him in Holy Writ, who vainly said,
" Soul, it is well with thee, take now thy rest,
" Thy store of riches is securely laid."
I'll not pursue that story's awful trope:
Leontio's heart was bounding high with hope;
Love, glory, honour, dazzling lay before,
In bright array, — he could not covet more.

XXVII.

His trance was broken by a silvery sound,
Which stealing softly through the jasmine bloom,
From minstrel placed upon the rising ground,
Beneath the window surely seem'd to come;
'Twas thrill of lute, Love's favourite instrument,
'Twas finely touch'd, and to the heart came home;
The air was plaintive, breathing languishment,

The voice that sung was mellow, but subdued;
Leontio listen'd, roused from musing mood;
The sweet strain ceased, and was again renew'd.
His vain heart whisper'd, " Inez, 'tis to thee
" I owe these notes of moonlight melody."
He look'd down on the garden, where with knee
Gently inclined to poise his light harp stood,
In costly garb array'd, a graceful boy,
Of years and mien well fitting such employ.
His limbs were slight and delicate—half conceal'd
By his wide crimson capa,—his brow veil'd
By the white plume that gracefully o'erhung
His minstrel cap. His lute was loosely slung
In silken bandeau clasp'd with clustering pearl;
His step was light as that of Indian girl.
Leontio spake, " Who sent thee, minstrel, here,
" With sweet theorb my lonesome night to cheer?"
The youth replied, " A lady's messenger
" I come to thee, thus deck'd in minstrel guise
" To veil my mission from all prying eyes;
" Nor longer I my errand may defer."
Forth from his bosom he a billet drew;
Leontio's eyes devour'd it—'twas from her!
He knew it well—its very form he knew!

" So please, my lord," thus spoke the boy—" fling down
" Your kerchief—for the window rears too high
" For my young stature, its bright balcony."
The mode was simple, a silk scarf was thrown
To the fair youth—and soon Leontio's touch
Was on the billet he had envied much.
'Twas seal'd with fair device, and redolent
With atar-gul's rich oriental scent:
He broke that seal, which for its motto bore
A leaf and "*je ne changerai qu'a la mort,*"
In lofty Spanish. Was't not strange that he
Should in that hour so lose all memory?
He deem'd it still from Inez,—and retired
Within, to hide the rapture it inspired.
But all too soon that sweet delusion fled,—
Helena's hand had traced those lines he read;
Ay—'twas Helena's anguish and despair,
Which as his eye perused them—met him there:
The injured one!—remorse came o'er him then;
Thus read he—thus had writ her wandering pen:—

" I write not to upbraid thee—that were vain,
I know my influence o'er thee long hath pass'd;
How I have loved thee!—'twere a bootless strain,
Bootless as 'tis to love thee to the last.

'Tis done — 'tis fix'd — the fatal die is cast —
My own Leontio! — but no, never more
May I thus name thee — yet mine once thou wast;
What hast thou made me? — what mankind abhor!
That dream was wild, 'twas rapturous, and 'tis o'er!

" How thou hast injured me — thy heart will tell,
Both shared the guilt — I bear the curse alone;
What thou didst swear to me, thou know'st full wel
If with thy love all memory hath not flown:
'Tis very like, but mine, alas! is grown
Tenacious in all things that breathe of thee;
Many things mock me now, and hope is gone,
But thou art ever present; and by me
I know the past cannot forgotten be.

" 'Tis nature's law; — but is't not passing strange,
That woman's love, which is her ruining,
Should in its fatal fervour never change,
Whilst man's is ever on the roving wing,
To him alone a not destructive thing:
Thine hath found other food — upon thy fame
The partial world no brand of scorn will fling;
But what is left to me? — a tarnish'd name,
And proud heart broken down by grief and shame.

" When first I met thee, that young heart was pure,—
I deem'd 'twould keep so—'twas my early sin—
I rested in my own strength too secure,
Nor thought that mortal love might entrance win;
But thine began, how soon! to burn within:
I blame not thee who did its weakness prove,
But my own pride which did the crime begin;
My thoughts no longer dwelt with God above,
I turn'd from heaven to list thy lay of love!

" Oh! how I worshipp'd thee!—the darkening shade
Thy passing form upon my pathway threw
Was my soul's idol—and its absence made
The earth a desert. In thy smile I grew
Like the fond sunflower in her monarch's view.
We parted,—*how* we parted,—let that rest,—
'Twas done—how I did mourn thee none e'er knew;
'Twas kept a fatal secret in my breast,
To be but to thine ear alone confess'd.

" I ask not thee,—love may not be compell'd—
Again, as thou hast felt, for me to feel;
Too long that love of thine hath been withheld,
And Fate hath now upon thee set her seal.

Oh! but forgive this last, this brief appeal,
And by that dear and fatal retrospect
Which o'er thee yet in dream-like guise may steal;
My last—first boon, oh! do not thou reject;
But towards me one kind farewell thought direct.

"Mine is no vain nor mercenary boon,—
Time was, of thee I had no boon to seek;
Brief is thy power to grant it,—now, how soon!
Thy *legal* love will thy free actions check.
Condemn me if thou wilt—my heart is weak;
But come once more to my deserted home,
And let me look on thee, and hear thee speak
One last—last time, if but to name my doom;
I can bear all from thee.——Leontio!—come."

Leontio closed the note, and with it stood
Grasp'd in his hand, in thoughtful attitude.
'Twas writ in very grief. His soul arose
In judgment 'gainst its own ingratitude.
Much had he injured her—and yet her heart
From its devotion was most loth to part.
But he must crush it—he had striven too long;
To hide from her how he had done her wrong.

Tis hard to be the herald of their fate,
To those whom we are making desolate:
Thus had Leontio felt—each day that pass'd
Had found him more reluctant than the last.
'Twere vain to see her now—'twere adding pain
On pain—her he could never love again:
But there was something in that mild appeal,
Which did his policy almost subdue;
Men's hearts are vain, and his could deeply feel
That it is soothing to be loved so true.
And she *did* love—though every human ill
He had heap'd on her—idolized him still.
Again Leontio read the billet through,—
She sought but for one sad, one short adieu:
'Twere cruel to deny such fond request;
Few moments would suffice for their farewell:
Would she reproach him? that he could not tell,
But he resolved to put her to the test.

XXVIII.

That fair page heard Leontio's brief reply,
And proudly turn'd him to depart from thence;
And as he turn'd, one flash of his dark eye
Met his, with talismanic influence;

His cap he doff'd not, but one ringlet bright
From his stoop'd brow in negligence came down;
And on that forehead's pure and polish'd white,
Full in Leontio's view the moon-ray shone;
The plume till then had veil'd it from his sight;
He would recall that boy—but he had flown.

XXIX.

It was the appointed time—the midnight hour—
Leontio sought Helena's lonely bower.
How should he meet her!—why did he relent!
Such were the thoughts that cross'd him as he went.
The river lay between them; I have said
How Miguel's garden its fair margin made.
There was no ripple on its surface, nor
Sound on its banks, save when some distant oar
Did cleave with drowsy stroke its smooth expanse,
Making wide circles on the waters glance.
How broad in the moon's yellow light it lay,
In form and beauty like an inland bay.
High on its banks the giant foliage rose,
With shadow blackening o'er its deep repose;
And convents toppling spire, and buttress old,
Reflected there in masses rude and bold;

Swift o'er it waveless course the boat did glide,
For double fee the eager bargemen plied;
They reach'd the further shore—he gain'd that grove,
Once the fond scene of wild and guilty love.
'Twas bounded by the river, and between
The wave and grove the aloe's stem was seen. (9)
Rearing its spiral leaves like lances high,
As if to pierce the secrets of the sky.
There droop'd the oleander—and the palm
Rose there—and wept the woodbine's honied balm:
Their dews upon Leontio's brow they cast,
And brought back fatal memory of the past.
He pluck'd a tube-rose, 'twas the last in bloom,
He knew Helena loved its rich perfume:
He placed it near his heart—its odorous breath
Gave out its sweets like love in one last sigh;
He cast it forth—the emblem pale of death!
No menial met him at the open gate,
The halls within lay wide and desolate:
A faint light glimmering from some central room
Served more to deepen than dispel the gloom;
He had no heart for play of fancy—or
He might have thought upon a tale of yore,

An eastern tale of an enchanted town,
Whose inmates all were into statues grown,
Yet with the hues of life. He wandered on
Led by that light, nor sound nor voice was there
His footsteps echo'd strangely on his ear:
The light gleam'd broad,—the wide saloon was near,
He linger'd at its door—a girandole
Shed forth its diamond radiance on the whole
Of that fair room. He pass'd not on, but still
Stood rooted there, almost against his will.
He knew not fear, but there was scene so strange
In that saloon, he felt his colour change,
And a wild impulse dart across his mind.
Far in the distance, where the faintest gleam
Of that rare lustre reach'd in wavering stream,
A dome was rear'd, and in it sat enshrined
Two shadowy forms—the one most like did seem
To Helena—but motionless and cold
As sculptured mourner o'er those urns that hold
The hoarded ashes of mortality.
The veil wreathed round the figure—the closed eye—
The upraised hands—the robe of sable hue—
The cheek on which no earthly colour grew,
Were statue like. Was't mockery, or was't true?

That other form which bore her company,
View'd in her shade, even more obscure and dim,
Was her dead sire Don Miguel, look and limb!
But he was in his grave—he could not come
Back to those halls from his Italian tomb!

XXX.

Leontio gazed!—Was he among the dead?
Their viewless arms might be around him spread!
Uprose that figure, sable-robed, and pale;
A curtain closed behind—she stood alone
Relieved in light—Don Miguel was gone.
'Twas Helena! her black and shrouding veil
Cast from her brow, even to her feet fell down:
Round that high brow was wreathed a cypress crown
Wrought out in emeralds, which as it was turn'd
Toward the light, in rainbow lustre burn'd.
She stood the genius of the spot. He gazed
On her in silent wonder, as she there
Rose on his sight so motionless and fair.
She was not changed, but only paler now,
And sorrow sate unfleeting on her brow;
Her dark eye then for the first time up-raised
Still in its undiminish'd splendour blazed.

There was no look of earth about her—all
Was calm—cold—passionless—spiritual;
But o'er her aspect came a sudden change,
The ice-bolt fell, and tears of softness came
Into those eyes,—emotion thrill'd her frame;
Men might have said she gain'd by that exchange,
But angels had claim'd kindred with her then,
And now she is a child of earth again.
Her lips gave utterance to one mournful cry,
"And art thou come?"—She like a nipt flower fell
Upon his heart, who once had loved her well.
"Leontio! art thou come to see me die?"
Then was her voice hush'd in one choking sigh.
"Helena! dearest Helena!" His soul was moved;
She almost hoped she was again beloved;
And he had well nigh felt his firmness shake,
He could not bear to see her heart thus break.
She lay within his arms—her heart to his—
In a delirium of returning bliss;
He did not drive her thence, but let her rest
Till she had eased the anguish of her breast;
Then, like a cedar rising from the storm,
She stood erect again in mind and form;

Yet bearing traces of the recent shower:
She seem'd the goddess of that magic bower;
Alas! she there had lavish'd every art,
To win him back to her adoring heart.
The flowers he loved gave out their fragrance there,
And fruit of every climate, rich and rare;
La Mancha's choicest wines, which might create
Luxurious thirst, and viands delicate,
Stood there display'd with almost regal state.
And gleam'd not there, to pain the dazzled sight,
As in some halls, a galaxy of light;
But one clear calm effulgence from above,
Pour'd through the room an evening light of love.

XXXI.

She stood beside the board — she fill'd with wine
A silver cup. "Mean are these halls of mine
"To the Valasco palace. — Poor this fare
"Compared with what invites thy palate there:
"But oh, Leontio! Helena hath striven
"To do thee honour — be the rest forgiven!"
He took the sparkling cup — the wine he quaff'd,
There was enchantment in the ruby draught.

Helena look'd upon her sable dress,
How well it graced her queen-like loveliness;
'Twas richest velvet of Genoa's loom,
Unlike the mourner's usual garb of gloom.
" This is no marriage robe — full well to thee
" Is known the extent of my misery;
" Although thou didst not — oh! and was it well? —
" The sire's last blessing to the orphan tell."
Few paces back she stept — her hand withdrew
A curtain's drapery, and gave to view,
Shrined in its gorgeous frame of fretted gold,
The portrait of her father, flush'd and full,
In years and martial bearing beautiful.
The limners art the tale of death had told;
For, shadow'd in the dim obscurity,
There raged the fight on the Italian shore,
In which Don Miguel fell, to rise no more.
She stood — her snowy arms flung o'er the frame:
How like she look'd to him! — they had the same
High cast of features, broad and lofty brow,
For hers resumed its proud expression now.
She gazed upon him till her rising grief
Rush'd to her eyes and made their gazing brief.

Leontio felt, as she design'd he should,
That she was truly of her father's blood.

XXXII.

This was her hour — she saw he deeply felt
The mute appeal — low at his feet she knelt,
With her arms clasp'd about him — lips from whence
Came all an injured woman's eloquence.
She call'd his memory to that blessed time,
When she was innocent, unstain'd by crime;
How he had loved her then! — himself had fired
That passion in her heart which so conspired
To work her ruin. — Was she now less fair?
It well might be, for she had pined until
Her very soul had waxen deadly chill,
And her mind yielded to a dark despair.
But if those eyes, once beautiful, were dim,
Oh! they had grown so, shedding tears for him!
Could Inez love him more? — Her prior claim
She urged — his oath that she should bear his name;
And when from battle he return'd — that she
With him to his far Murcian home should flee.
Had he not solemnly sworn it, in that hour
When last they met, in yon most fatal bower?

And will he now renounce her — fling her off
To be of all Seville the gibe and scoff?
The daughter of a hero! — the once proud
And worshipp'd idol of a saintly crowd;
Was it not love of him had brought her low,
And would he leave her writhing from the blow?
She watch'd his countenance, — a wild hope sprung,
And to that hope, like drowning wretch, she clung.

XXXIII.

How could he chide her! — kneeling there — so full
Of grief, and shame, and unabated love;
With her white arms, so long and beautiful,
Wound closely round him. How could he reprove
That fondness, which if it, alas! had grown
To crime — had sinn'd for him, and him alone.
Yet he *did* chide her, and ignobly strove
To cast all blame from his unmanly soul,
And heap on her the infamy of the whole.
He had not deem'd she own'd a heart so frail,
He thought her shielded by a vestal's veil;
What was his crime? — Love in her bosom burn'd,
And mutual passion he for hers return'd;
'Twas idle now against the past to rail;

'Twas but a youthful error, and no more,
Hush'd in their hearts, 'twould pass all silent o'er;
The world would hear nought of it; — why then waste
One precious hour in grieving o'er the past.
He swore to her — cold sensualist — how he swore! —
That she was lovely, ay, and loved as ever;
And spread his arms to fold again her form
To his false heart, and riot in each charm;
But she sprung from his grasp, and answer'd —
" Never!
" Oh! never, — so heaven witness me! — shalt thou
" Thy perjured arms, thou base one, round me throw."
She stood — oh! how shall I describe her — how
Portray her bearing as she towering stood,
With eye of lightning — brow to which the blood
Rush'd vengeful red, — high breast and swelling vein,
Lip, mute with its unutterable disdain;
She seem'd to hover in the air, and grew
Almost to giant stature in his view;
Yet in her wrath so gracefully sublime,
A gazer might have wish'd wrath were no crime.
She spoke — her voice accorded with her mien,
The Greek had framed such for Jove's haughty queen;

" Fool that I was to trust thy smiles again !
" I deem'd — high heaven ! 'twas frenzy in my brain —
" That honour yet within his heart might dwell :
" 'Twas crime, indeed, to love a coward so well !"
He shrunk beneath the vengeance of her eye,
There was nought earthly like to it. A cry —
A craven cry escaped him — he had met
His foe undaunted — so would meet him yet :
Had faced the battle in its darkest lower,
Defied, and even woo'd the frown of fate ;
But he had never braved a woman's hate ;
And *that* subdued him. Never till that hour
Had he felt fear come o'er him : — he had need,
For she had nerved her sinews for a deed —
How shall I write it ! Forth from her dark vest,
Flash'd the bright steel — 'twas raised — 'twas aim'd —
it fell.
Merciful God ! ah ! no, not on his breast —
But to the earth. Her heart was woman's still,
The thought was murd'rous — but she could not kill !
The conflict past, she fell — her dark hair wreathed
Around her form, — nor moved, nor look'd, nor breathed.

END OF CANTO SECOND.

CANTO THIRD.

Think'st thou I mean to live to be forgiven?
Oh, thou hast known but little of Calista!
If thou hadst never heard my shame; if only
The midnight moon and silent stars had seen it,
I would not bear to be reproach'd by them.

The Fair Penitent.

I.

NIGHT! thou hast other tales than those which Love
Delights to tell, of toyings in the grove;
Thy stillness framed for man's serene repose,
By him perverted, multiplies his woes.
Thy star-lit veil, descending o'er the earth,
Becomes the signal of the Hydra's birth.
Forth from thy dark and solitary walks
To snatch her morsel, pale-eyed Famine stalks.
Lust riots wild, and Malice wreaks conceal'd
Her deadly hate, where hand is none to shield.

Foul Slander flings abroad with viewless hand
The baneful scroll which is to blast and brand;
And Theft, and Fraud, and Folly's wanton brood
Infest the stillness of thy solitude.
Such are the nights of cities! Seek those haunts—
Far from the great and gay—where still her rights
Nature asserts—ye'll witness other nights;—
Man rests secure—few are his cares and wants,
Sweet are his hours of toil—his homeward way,
O'er moonlight meads, through vineyards deep, doth lie;
Whilst gay careering 'neath the autumnal sky,
The wild birds sing their simple roundelay.
His path no watchman guards, but one mute friend
With unbought love doth on his steps attend.
His cot, 'midst sheltering groves, rears to the moon
Its time-stain'd walls, and thatch of deepening brown;
His shadow seen—his babes run forth to meet
Their sire's return, with baby welcome sweet,
Their mother smiles her joy—his hearth glows warm,
He sleeps in bliss, nor dreams of coming harm.

II.

Seville! thy streets—I write of by-past time,—
Were teeming with pollution and with crime,

The Crescent's guilt did to the Cross pertain
More than her tainted blood, "the brand of Spain." (10)
Vain was the preaching of fanatic priest,
His bigotted pride the evil but increased.
When woke thy morn, the active Alguazil,
Proclaim'd aloud some midnight deed of ill;
The mansion fired—the store-house rich despoil'd—
Sevillian youths in deadly fray embroil'd.
His was no task of import mean or light,
The morn that follow'd that eventful night;
No serf nor artisan, in drunken strife,
Had paid the debt of his plebeian life;
Spain's noblest blood had been most foully shed:
Such was the news throughout the city spread.
With eager ears and eyes, the vulgar throng,
Urged by the exciting impulse, rush'd along
Her narrow streets; each anxious first to view
The fatal spot, and prove the tidings true.
'Twas near the Alcazar's towers, that place of blood—
The living tide condensed there gazing stood;
Though, vestige of that deed, there but remain'd
A daggled plume and pavement crimson-stain'd;
But those stood there who had beheld the slain,
And willingly they told the tale again.

He lay there (thus the narrative was told)
Wreathed in his velvet capa, rich with gold,
But stain'd and pierced by poniard's triple stroke,
Which in the last death-thrust had inly broke.
And some had seen that ghastly face—and never
Might they forget it, to their dying day;
'Twas fair in form as eye had look'd on ever,
But in its stern repose so fearful lay,
With dark luxuriant ringlets, steep'd in gore,
Flung o'er that brow which ne'er must brighten more.
The lordly hand a ring of diamond wore,
Whose centre held a braid of auburn hair;
Upon his breast Spain's royal badge shone fair;
Then knew they him—their city's boast and pride—
Who soon had made Valasco's heir his bride.
The gallant, and the brave!—how bright, how brief,
Had been his day!—a sympathetic grief
Pervaded all—high hopes were crush'd, and mirth
Departed from their town—a general gloom
O'erspread that late so joyous spot of earth—
All Seville mourn'd Leontio's early doom.

III.

How felt young Inez on her bridal morn?
They hid from her with care that dreadful tale;
Noon came—but *he* came not!—she wander'd pale
About her chamber like a dove forlorn;
Put off her gay attire, and sat her down
With lute or book, but each had lost its charm;
Her long suspense to agony had grown;
And much she question'd them of grief, or harm
Which might have hinder'd him—but answer none
Gave they, or vague reply—she watch'd alone;
List'ning the opening door, or nearing tread
In gallery which to her chamber led;
Or to the throbbing of her own poor breast,
Which wild with fear now could not be suppress'd.
At last the fatal truth, despite their care,
From menial lips reach'd that sweet lady's ear;
Told with that eagerness the vulgar feel
To paint the horrors they should not reveal.
She heard with look aghast—nor question'd more.
Well nigh that tale had wrought another death:
From her white lips came forth nor sound nor breath;
Her pulses ceased—she swoon'd upon the floor.

The affrighted menial shriek'd aloud for aid,
They came, the startled household—Clara came,
Her grief-struck mother too. The guilty maid
With whining sorrow screen'd herself from blame.
But it was done. Upon her couch they laid
That lifeless form, whose young pure soul they deem'd
Had wing'd its way, for ray of life there seem'd
None left within her heart; and there she lay,
Pale, and as cold as marble—her small hand
Had all the hue of death, nor could expand
To meet her sister's, but it droop'd away
Over the couch's silken drapery,
Listless and lifeless; and her beauteous eye
Brighten'd no more, but its long lashes shaded
That ashen cheek which sorrow still pervaded.
They call'd on her—they spoke to her; but word
Or cry of theirs her dull ears never heard.
Her lady mother all that dreadful day
And night watch'd by her;—Clara sat there too
By her cold couch, and chafed her changeless brow;
And o'er her bent her sire with locks of grey
Mingling with hers of auburn—and hot tears
Falling from eyes whose light the film of years
Had almost darken'd. Still in trance she lay,

Nor human skill could break it;—but it broke
At last when nature will'd—and with one shriek she woke.

IV.

She woke and knew her sorrow,—but we'll leave
Her in the sacredness of home to grieve;
Friends were around her—sympathy dwelt there,
And time and resignation calm'd despair.
But there was one—oh! where was her calm home?
It yawn'd before her in the dubious tomb!
The law must be appeased—the multitude
Cried out for retribution—"Blood for blood!—
"Vengeance upon the midnight murderer!"
Suspicion of the guilt fell dark on her.
His footsteps had been watch'd—the bargemen told
How they had plied for double fee of gold;
And other eyes had seen him at that gate,
Leading to Miguel's halls, whose hearths were cold,
They knew, and chambers bare and desolate;
And she, the daughter of the honour'd dead,
Had on that evening from her convent fled.
'Twere well at least to prove suspicion vain.
The high Alcaid with his official train,
In all the pomp of civic dignity,
Through Seville's streets toward that lone mansion sped.

They sought Helena;—'twas not like that she,
If guilty, from that place had fail'd to flee;
They cross'd the court—resistance met they none,
And so they passed with heavy footsteps on.
Through the dull galleries daylight dimly stream'd,
The dwelling, as 'twas meet, deserted seem'd;
But all at once they burst on that saloon,
Closed up like midnight, though 'twas burning noon;
And there she sat!—the dying lamp gleam'd faint
Upon her figure,—language cannot paint
Her marble look—her desolate despair,
Nor their transfix'd amaze to meet her there,
Like tenant of the the tomb; she whom they had thought
To have found there, with guilt and shame o'erwrought.
They traced no sign of fear—but guilt—deep guilt
Glared all around her: at her feet there lay
That gleaming poniard, jewell'd at the hilt,
But bloodless, that avail'd not—there it lay;
Was it fit instrument for vestal's hand?
Upon the board that silver cup did stand,
As he had drain'd it;—wine and viands rare
In house of mourning spread! what did they there?
She heard their errand—heard that it was done,
That deed which she even yet was pondering on.

But it came suddenly and fearful now,
That it was done men knew not where nor how.
The thought struck to her brain and shook each limb,
And she cried wildly, " I have murder'd him !
" Oh ! I have murder'd him !" and then she threw
Herself upon the earth and shriek'd anew.
" 'Tis guilt—acknowledged guilt,"—such was the cry
That rose around her, who all silently
Let them rail on—nor raised her calm defence;
And let them bind her arms and lead her thence.
Yet as they fix'd their ignominious bands
Upon the wrists of those most beauteous hands,
And led her forth a culprit in the sight
Of all Seville, her father's soul shone bright
In her dark eyes—then downward they were cast
In shame, which quench'd their strange and sudden light.

V.

'Twas wonderful to see how, as she pass'd
Through those long streets, window and balcony
Were throng'd with gazers; but there rose no cry
Of gratulation from them, nor applause
That guilt was yielded up to their just laws.

Mute gazed they, or exclaim'd, " It cannot be!
" The daughter of her sire—the good—the brave—
" So beautiful and proud, on whom the mind
" Had dwelt as on a sacred thing enshrined—
" It cannot be!"—
Still gazed they eager on
That mute procession, and that awful one.
No hand was laid on Helena,—between
Her guards she walk'd,—her rich and flowing dress
Sweeping the ground,—her brow no more serene,
But bow'd with shame, pride, utter hopelessness.
So splendid her attire, that moving scene
Was most like Roman pageant,—she that queen
Who graced the triumph of Aurelian:
Her white arms wreathed in her long sable veil,
Through which their costly jewels glitter'd bright
As brilliant stars seen through the gloom of night;
Her tresses, flutter'd by the sultry gale,
Spread on her neck and o'er her features wan;
And on her noble brow that emerald wreath
Yet shone, and shed a glorious ray beneath.

VI.

They reach'd the hall of judgment, where elate
With his success the proud Alcaid sate.
Array'd on each side of the chamber, stood
Those who bore witness to that deed of blood,
And notaries, and an official train
Attendant on judicial courts in Spain.
The first stept forth and gave their evidence;
Then was Helena ask'd for her defence.
Drooping she stood, and but for timely aid
Proffer'd by one who did compassionate—
Whate'er her guilt—her lorn and wretched state,
She had sunk down before that stern Alcaid.
Twice did her lips essay to speak, but sound
They gave none forth; and when at length she found
A voice articulate,—and ears were lent
Attentively with silence most profound—
She but replied, "Oh! I am innocent!"
And with eyes raised to heaven, and hands—but no—
Those beauteous arms in fetters still were bound—
She look'd the marble eloquence of woe!
Forth drew he then—her judge—a written scroll;
'Twas that appeal of her despairing soul

Which she had sent Leontio; now unclosed,
Read coldly through, and openly exposed
To all eyes there, and coldly canvass'd o'er,
As if it had been writ expressly for
Their cavilling. High Heaven! and did she bear
All this, and stand yet firmly, calmly there?
By one wild impulse urged she forward sprung,
But was remanded back with threat'ning tongue.
" And wilt thou swear this writing is not thine?"
Helena answer'd meekly,—" It is mine."
" That dagger too—how came it at thy feet—
" Is it for female hand a bauble meet?"
But she replied not—how could she reply?
'Twas not for her to tell him how, or why.
She sought not to raise mercy in his breast,
'Twere better now that she were laid at rest;
Her fame was branded—her fair name disgraced,
She reck'd not now how soon it were effaced.
Answer she gave none. Some of torture spoke,
But that, they mark'd, in her no terror woke.
At last they thought them of a dreadful test:
Within a chamber opening from that hall,
In sable state, his mantle o'er him spread,
Lay in his frightful sleep the ghastly dead:

It was a spectacle might well appal
A sterner soul. They led her to that place,
And sudden raised the covering from the face;
She had not deem'd who lay there, and her brain
Reel'd at she sight; she shriek'd, and shriek'd again
Till they removed her,—then in rigid swoon
Even on that fearful threshold she fell down.

VII.

'Twas guilt, they cried, 'twas guilt—acknowledged guilt—
They cannot look on blood who blood have spilt.
'Twas bootless her denial—all combined
To chase a shade of doubt from out the mind.
High then arose that *sage* and stern Alcaid;
With pompous voice, and look almost sublime,
Told o'er the guilt, the horror of her crime;
And many things I wot not of he said:
But urged not there one word of clemency,
Nor mercy from the court for her he pray'd;
The young, the beautiful, was doom'd to die!
Low bow'd she down, her brow submissive bent:
" 'Tis just," she cried, " yet am I innocent!"

VIII.

Four days roll'd on—and heavily they roll'd;
The fifth beheld that gloomy pageant pass:
The convent bells a muffled farewell toll'd
For the departed. Solemn and sad it was
To hear them, how with dull unechoing stroke
Each on the other peal'd—each on its fellow broke,
Till with continuous knell Seville rang round,
As every tower and spire a voice had found.
And from the rampart's height a cannonade
To each deep toll a heavy answer made:
For he had been a soldier, whose cold clay
Upon its bier of state so proudly lay.
High waved the plumes, and red the flambeaux' flare
Cast on the corse their broad and lurid glare;
And on the rich escutcheon'd pall, and on
The high cross borne before, those torches shone.
Slow moved the train of priests and mourners, who
Paid to the dead the last sad honours due.
Slow moved they on, with heavy tread, and mute;
The sound was as the tramp of but one foot
Striking to earth's deep centre, file on file,
Until they reach'd St. Francis' holy pile;

Then pausing in the porch, like some black tide
That in a cavern's mouth its depth doth hide,
The distant crowd saw but the lower'd plume,
The banners droop'd,—then all was lost in gloom!

IX.

'Twas on the evening of that day, when ceased
The city's tumult, that an aged priest
Sought for admission to the prisoner's cell.
His shaded brow was pale, and stricken well
He was in years, far worn his garb austere,
And in his large mild eye there dwelt a tear;
Though he would willingly have dash'd it thence,
Ere they had mark'd its silent eloquence;
And his voice falter'd as he spoke *her* name,
To whom in Christian charity he came.
The jailor heard his errand, and undid
The prison bolts,—so had the Alcaid bid.
The stair was dark and winding, and away
It bore them down—far from the light of day;
And humid grew the atmosphere, and chill,
And with unwholesome dews the place did fill;
And dreary were the echoes they awoke
As the dull earth their heavy footsteps shook.

The jailor pointed to a distant door,
Pond'rous and arch'd, scarce raised above the floor.
Upon its hinge he turn'd the sullen bar—
Roll'd back upon them then, with startling jar,
The huge black portal,—and when this was done
He hied him thence, leaving the priest alone.

X.

So had he deem'd at first,—but soon a lamp,
Faint-glimmering through the dungeon drear and damp,
Show'd him a form all dim and shadowy,
That on a pallet-couch outstretch'd did lie.
The figure rose, and, with an arm which shone
Like a fair moonbeam, shaded from the light
Eyes that were grown weak now, and aching quite.
And a voice spake all mournful and subdued,—
" Who breaks at this hour on my solitude?
" At this hour, say I?—are not day and night
" Alike to me?—the dull dark hours they steal
" Each on the other, but no change I feel."
The priest drew nigh. She felt upon her arm
The tear of sympathy fall fresh and warm.
She knew him then—her kind confessor knew—
And to her eyes their own tears sprang anew;

The first that she had shed since on that spot
She had been left, she deem'd by men forgot.
" Father!" she cried, " and have I one friend left?
" I thought I was of all alike bereft;
" I dared not ask for thee, — I thought that thou,
" As all mankind have done, wouldst spurn me now.
" Oh! bless thee for this deed!" In bitterness
Of silent woe, his hands the old man wrung,
While to his knees Helena weeping clung.
" And do not *you* believe my guiltlessness?
" 'Tis true I never did my shame confess
" Even to your ear, — of this I much repent —
" But of that other crime I am most innocent:
" Father, I'm innocent, — but you turn now
" In wrath away your reverential brow!"

The holy man had Miguel's daughter known
Even from her birth, and loved her as his own;
Had watch'd her opening youth, and heard each day
Her infant lips to Heaven their tribute pay;
And joy'd to see her grow like some rare plant,
Within the sacred shade a youthful saint.
But how she had deceived him! — in her breast
Had cherish'd thoughts which could not be confess'd;

And now, — 'twas anguish to his mind — but still
He deem'd her guilty, even despite his will.
Her eyes were fix'd on his, — she saw mistrust
Was in his countenance — and felt 'twas just.
" Father! — dear Father! — Oh but now recall
" One pardoning look, and I will tell thee all!
" I know that all things have conspired to blast
" My name, — crime there, on crime is cast;
" And I am doom'd, and am resign'd to die;
" But I am guiltless as yon heaven is high!
" That I did suffer human love to dwell
" Within this heart is known alas! too well;
" I loved to madness, and in madness fell.
" But who can paint, save they whose hearts like mine
" Have yielded to the tempter, — who can tell,
" When that wild dream of guiltiness hath fled,
" The shame, remorse, and horror that combine
" To wreak their curses on the sinner's head?
" Slumber was mine no more, — all night, the thought
" Of what I was my brain to frenzy wrought:
" Where'er I turn'd me, every eye did seem
" To pierce my guilt; of every tongue the theme
" I thought I was, as if a voice were found,
" To speak my crime the list'ning world around.

" Oh holy Father! — when I've met thy look,
" The dreadful secret has oft well nigh broke
" From my despairing and distracted soul,
" And I have burn'd to tell to thee the whole.
" But shame withheld me, — I dwelt on in art,
" With sin, as with a vampyre, at my heart.

" I heard he had renounced me, — that his troth
" Was plighted to Valasco's daughter. Then
" Was my brain wrought up to its vengeful wrath;
" Cursing the pride, the perfidy of men,
" I thought to mar those rites, and slay us both:
" But one hope linger'd yet, — he might relent,
" And with that hope, to meet him there I went.
" Father, he spurn'd me! — frantic as I was,
" And kneeling at his feet, the sole loved cause
" Of all my anguish. Then I deem'd I could
" See him die inch by inch; and that his blood,
" Ebbing away thus, could not change my mood.
" I raised my hand with the intent to kill;
" But when I look'd upon his countenance,
" Love, in my bosom, reign'd all-powerful still;
" My fearful purpose was subdued at once:

" And at his feet, ay, even at *his* feet — down,
" Powerless I fell, in long — long — deathlike swoon!
" I knew no more, — nor know I yet, — for when
" I waken'd from that stupor, he was gone.
" I know not how he fell; but this I know,
" I would have died to shield him from the blow;
" So all-engrossing was that love of mine.
" But it is past — and I must meet death now;
" Nor do I shrink — nor does my heart repine;
" What am I?—High Heaven!—branded and accurst!
" If the axe spared me — would my heart not burst?
" Where could I hide me? — all mankind revile
" And turn from me as from a thing most vile.
" The holy sanctuary opes for me no more,
" As it hath done, its once protecting door.
" Where could I hide me? — in some desert cave,
" Like maniac scoop, day after day, my grave;
" And lay me down there, brain-struck, until death,
" Hardly less spectral, stopp'd my icy breath.
" No — from the bloody scaffold, — even from there
" Death looks less frightful, and the grave more fair.
" The world will load and stigmatize my fame,
" It matters not, — I shall not feel the shame;
" There breathes not now another of my name,

" To bear my guilt or curse my memory:
" In me the last of Miguel's race will die.
" But thus to die! Sure Death hath hoarded throes
" For one whose days are doom'd to such a close.
" Be still my troubled heart, — disgraced — decried —
" Oh what have I, so fallen, to do with pride!"

XI.

The priest staid with her till the hour grew late,
And spoke to her of pardon; — bid her rest
Her hope on Christ, though she had much transgress'd;
And gave to her the symbol consecrate;
And strove to fit her for her coming fate;
And wept with her, and heard, and heard again
Her vows of innocence now given in vain.
She thought he turn'd him to depart — and laid
Her hand upon his garb — and earnest pray'd
Him to remain with her. " Dear Father, stay —
" Brief time will now elapse ere dawn of day:
" The loneliness of night seems sad to one
" Whose sand of life will shortly now have run;
" And much I fear my weaken'd mind will fail;
" I would not have it in *that* moment quail.

" Thy face alone, in aspect doth not change,
" For many things around me glare most strange:
" Mark how the damp hath wrought dark tracery
" Upon these walls; — thence see I forms look down,
" Which sometimes mock, then gibe and menace me,
" Or else they lower on me their demon frown.
" Is it not strange? — and all this day, a bell
" Has rung in my rack'd ears its ceaseless knell.
" Stay near me, Father, — soon it will pass o'er,
" And thou and I in this life meet no more!"

XII.

That night wore on, and dawn'd the glorious sun;
Already in the square they had begun
To raise that tragic stage; — already there
Flock'd the vain populace; and from the stair
Of that high platform, to the Alcazar's wall,
You had not seen a single foot-print fall;
And utter'd they one loud confused hum,
Impatient of the spectacle to come:
Yet did they mourn and murmur at her doom,
Whose life and beauty was in youth's first bloom.
From San Paolo's neighbouring spire there stole
One deep bell's long and melancholy toll;

As though it would not with a louder chime
Tell forth the doom'd one's infamy and crime.
The city guard approach'd, — a long bright line
Of pikes and halberds in the light did shine;
Then came she whom they look'd for, — firm, tho' pale,
And screen'd as she was wont in ample veil;
With tresses wreathed, and rosary of gold
Glittering upon her vestment's sable fold.
Serene and calm she came, but there was seen
No trace of mind presumptuous in her mien;
She lean'd upon the priest, with beauteous eye
Down-bent in token of humility.
He led her onward to the fatal spot
Hung like the scaffold in black drapery;
The guard closed round, — the crowd beheld her not,
For she kneel'd down a little while to pray,
And from her face to put the veil away:
Then saw they her with flowing hair uprise,
Like some fair vision on their wondering eyes;
One look upon the splendid sun she cast,
One aching look — she knew it was her last;
Then kiss'd the crucifix, and stoop'd her brow: —
There was no whisper in the crowd below;

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They saw the bright axe in the sunlight glare,
And one long tress of her uplifted hair;
Then saw they nothing — only heard the stroke
As it fell dead and heavy on the block:
And silence reign'd, and horror all around,
Nor sought one voice to break the hush profound.

XIII.

My tale draws to a close, — there but remains
To lift that veil mysterious which pertains
To its catastrophe. Years pass'd away,
And soon was lost the memory of that day.
Don Miguel's halls another master own'd,
And Seville's talk new theme of wonder found;
Internal strife or foreign armament,
Each in its turn a source of converse lent.
But some there were to whom that fearful dream
Came ever and anon, and still did seem
As the event of yesterday; and grew
In their lone hearts each year with vigour new.
'Twas thus with Inez, — and with that old priest,
Whose mind to dwell on it had never ceased;
And oft he ponder'd on those vows which she
Who suffer'd death had made of innocency.

But that deep secret still lay unreveal'd,
Though much he marvell'd how it was conceal'd.
His faithful life wore on, — its tranquil close
Seem'd but the foretaste of a sweet repose;
Yet still he linger'd in the sacred ways,
If but from habit of his early days;
And soothed the couch of death, although full soon
His own clay must yield up the immortal boon.
'Twas in the dead hour of one awful night
That he was summon'd from his rest to shrive
The soul of one who had brief time to live.
The light'ning-flash shone through the window bright,
And sullen growl'd the storm, and loud the rain
Plash'd on the roof, and drench'd the wintry plain.
'Twas night ill fitting one of his full age
To venture forth and buffet with its rage.
Yet he defied it, and went forth, — but where,
I know not, — all is dark and dubious there:
But 'twas to no mean humble-roof'd abode;
His aged steps on costly carpets trod,
Which might have graced a Moorish monarch's throne;
And all around in gold and marble shone.
Within that princely chamber, 'neath a dome
Of velvet like the peach's purple bloom,

A figure lay, on which the brilliant stream
Of lamp-light through that crimson shade did gleam
Unnatural lustre. Silken drapery spread
Its sumptuous folds around him, and his head
Was pillow'd upon eider down; but still
Amid this luxury he reposed but ill.
The priest drew near, — his unclosed eye was dim,
And strong convulsions shook each wasted limb:
He touch'd the brow, and that was icy chill;
He lay in slumber, if such could be call'd
A frightful sleep, that every eye appall'd.
His blue lips moved, his glassy eyeballs roll'd,
And his hand grappled with the curtain's fold;
Or pointed to the room's extreme extent,
As if his mind on object there was bent,
To his sight only visible, or seen
Dimly upon the tapestry's motley screen.
And then he groan'd, and gnash'd his teeth, and threw
His arms about, — and then he woke, and grew
More sane and tranquil, and the cold drops fell
Fast from his brow, and broke its icy spell.
You might have heard his heart throb deep and loud,
Heaving the lawn that wreathed him like a shroud;
And still across his waking memory came
That vision, fainter, but in mood the same.

And he glared wildly on the priest, — and felt
For murderous weapons in the old man's belt.
But recollection slow return'd, — his mind,
With effort strong, realities combined;
Yet fear'd the haunting demons were not gone;
And whispered cautiously, "Are we alone?"

The penitent first spoke of a youth pass'd
In riot and debauchery; — of wealth
Lavish'd in wantonness, until at last,
With ruin'd fortunes, and with wasted health,
He fled his father's home and frowns by stealth.
Then came he to Seville, where he did strive
To learn those arts by which the needy live;
He fought her battles, and gain'd some renown,
And worshipp'd, with the multitude, a crown.
But not at that time, — though 'twas alter'd since,
Gain'd he much by the favour of his prince.
He saw Valasco's heirs, — ambition fired
His heart, and love with desperate fate conspired.
He woo'd young Inez, and at first he deem'd
She smiled upon his suit, — but soon came he
The Murcian Lord, Leontio, — and fate beam'd
On him no more her rays auspiciously.

High in that lady's love his rival grew,
And hate within his bosom ripen'd too.
He had stood near them in the olive grove,
When Clara sang her lay of Moorish love.
He mark'd their mingling looks, — the crimson flush
Spreading on Inez' cheek its amorous blush:
And 'twas enough, — their secret was confess'd.
Then rose the demon powerful in his breast;
'Twas but a well aim'd stroke — some drops of gore —
And he would fear Leontio's wiles no more.

There was a pause in the confession, — and
The penitent could no more his voice command.
Some fearful image cross'd him — "Hark!" he cried,
"What voice is that?" The trembling monk replied,
"'Tis but the groaning of the thunder-peal,
"Speak on, if thou hast aught yet to reveal."
"'Twas done! not by this hand, but by this heart,
"And hidden well by golden bribe and art.
"But then, what gain'd I? — the grief-stricken maid
"Fled from my love to St. Rosolia's shade.
"I 'scaped the vengeance of the laws, — one fell
"Of my foul crime the victim innocent,

" But that guilt clung to me where'er I went,
" Making my soul its own fierce burning hell!
" Is there no hope for me? — Oh Father say!"

The priest had turn'd in sickening fear away,
And o'er his brow his shrouding garb had flung,
Still on his ear the dark confession rung;
He thought on that yet well remember'd day,
And on the parting words of Helena,
How to the last she had asserted clear
Her innocence. He turn'd him — what lay there?
The murderer's corse stretch'd on its gorgeous bier!
Loud roll'd the storm, one broad sulphureous flame
Flash'd through the chamber, — and then redly came
Full on that couch. The features of the dead
Glared in the light one moment; — then were spread
O'er them those pale and livid hues that come
Faintly to show the secrets of the tomb.

NOTES

TO

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE BRIDAL.

(1) *It is the hour of prayer in proud Seville!*—Page 1.

The following striking and beautiful picture of the Oraciones is given by Alexander R. C. Dallas, Esq. in his "Manners in Spain."

"The sun had been some time apparently enlarging the circumference of his orb; his brilliant disk had gradually received its evening tinge of red, and now his last ray darted upwards from the refulgent bosom of the ocean, streaking with gold the expanded edge that veiled his face. It was the signal for the Oraciones, or evening prayer, which being repeated by the tolling of the bell of every church, the whole city (Cadiz), the whole kingdom, addressed a prayer and a thanksgiving to the Almighty Being who had brought the day to a close. The crowd upon the Almeda, whose busy hum and footsteps mingled their bruit upon the ear like the fall of waters, where the course of a gentle streamlet is broken by some impending rock, now stood still, and there prevailed, as if by magic, a sudden, profound, and awful

silence. At the sound of the bell the carriages stopped, all who were sitting arose, those who were walking remained in the position in which this moment overtook them; all conversation was suspended, and every one repeated an inward prayer. The sign of the cross, which closed the prayer of each, was the signal for the breaking of this holy silence; every one gave a salutation to those who surrounded him, known or unknown, and then the stream flowed on unaltered in its course."

(2) *And those were days of bloodshed.* — Page 4.

The reigns of Charles V. of Spain, and of Francis I. of France, present a series of bloody engagements, of which their contest respecting the imperial crown of Germany was but the commencement. In their quarrels the Milanese territory was frequently the cause as well as the scene of action. Henry VIII. of England was fully aware of the necessity of keeping the balance of power between these two ambitious potentates; and Pope Clement VII. was rendered fatally conscious of it by the entrance of Charles's armies into Rome, the barbarous plunder of that devoted city, and his own imprisonment. Historical precision is of minor importance in a poem simply fictitious, in which historical events are made use of only to bring out the leading incidents. I have not, therefore, thought it necessary to specify any particular battle between the two nations; I have merely availed myself of one of the victories gained by the Spanish monarch over Francis.

(3) *Like the Medina wind.* — Page 13.

M. Rocca mentions, in his account of Andalusia, that the

scorching wind which comes from the east is called by the Andalusians the *Medina wind.*

(4) ——— *The ample zaguan.* — Page 22.

The entrance to most Andalusian dwelling-houses lies through a passage with two doors, one to the street, and another which opens into the Pateo (square). This passage is called *Zaguan*, a pure Arabic word, signifying *a porch.*

Don Leucadio Doblado.

(5) *The black Montera cap.* — Page 30.

The Montera cap of black velvet, ornamented with frogs and tassels of the same colour, is much worn by the Sevillian gentlemen at bull-fights. Their *tout ensemble* on these occasions is highly picturesque, and not ungraceful. They wear a short loose jacket of silk, chintz, or dimity, the sleeves of which are not sewed to the body, but laced with broad ribands of a suitable colour, swelling gracefully round the top of the shoulder; a profusion of hanging buttons either silver or gold, mostly silver gilt twinkle in numerous rows round the wrists of these dresses.

(6) *The Banderilla in his hand remain'd.* — Page 30.

The Banderillero, or Banderilla, literally "little flag," is a shaft of two feet in length, pointed with a barbed steel, and gaily ornamented with sheets of painted paper.

Don Leucadio Doblado.

(7) ——— *Picadore.* — Page 31.

Pikeman.

(8) *Don Miguel like the Theban smiled serene,*
Rejoicing in the glory he had seen! — Page 33.

Epaminondas.

(9) *The aloe's stem was seen.* — Page 68.

M. Rocca speaks of the Aloe in Andalusia shooting up to the height of trees, and forming the usual hedge to their fields.

(10) *More than her tainted blood, "the brand of Spain."*—P. 81.

The least mixture of African, Indian, Moorish, or Jewish blood, taints a whole family to the most distant generations. It is a fact, that many of the grandees and titled *noblesse* of this country, derive a large portion of their blood from the Jews and the Morescoes. Their pedigree has been traced up to these cankered branches, in a manuscript book, which neither the influence of government nor the terrors of the Inquisition have been able completely to suppress. It is called *Tizon de Espana*, The brand of Spain.

Don Leucadio Doblado.

SAPPHO;

A DRAMATIC SKETCH.

O lasso!
Quanti dolci pensier, quanto disio,
Menò costoro al doloroso passo!

DANTE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

PHAON.

HIPPARCHUS, *a misanthrope.*

Priests of Apollo Leucadius.

IMBRIUS,
LYNCEUS, } *foreigners.*

SAPPHO.

CLEIS, *daughter of* SAPPHO,

MEGARA,
ATTHIS, } *female friends of* SAPPHO.

SAPPHO.

SCENE I.

The sea-shore of the Island of Lesbos. — Time, evening.

SAPPHO, PHAON.

PHAON.

AGAIN Apollo quits our Lesbian isle,
Round whose delicious shores, young Zephyrus,
Whom the god prisons in the sultry caves
All the long day, or in the ocean's depths,
Resumes his wonted sport —

SAPPHO.

Kissing the rose,
His ancient love, who oft hath mourn'd his rashness,
Or toying with the clusters of the vine,

Or sighing o'er the blue expiring waves,
Which bring their varied tribute to the strand,
And die through very wantonness — enamour'd.
Oh Hesperus! eve's bright-eyed messenger! — the hour
That brings the ringdove to her balmy nest,
And all the brood of nature to repose,
Lighted by thy eternal lamp, comes on;
And thou awaken'st in the heart sweet thoughts
And fond desires, that shun the glare of day,
But come forth with the stars, like odorous gums
Wept by Arabian groves beneath the moon;
Thou bring'st my spirit to its worshipp'd shrine,
My bosom to its rest in Phaon's arms;
Where, as I utter now my burning vows,
I wish that I, like yonder murmuring waves,
In the excess of ecstasy could die.

(*To* PHAON.)

Mine own beloved! why bendest thou those eyes, —
My orbs of life which I do worship solely —
Thus fixedly upon the purpling sea?

PHAON.

Because thine rested there. I did but seek
To win the ray of glory thence reflected.

SAPPHO.

Thou too canst flatter, Phaon — proving mine
A very woman's heart, that lists thy words,
Nor much rebukes. Methinks I'm jealous grown
Of every look enamour'd Nature stealeth,
As ever Juno of her rival's charms.

PHAON.

I'll gaze no more, since that doth trouble thee,
But 'tis an evil of thine own creating;
For thou didst lead me first to rural fanes,
Bidding me kneel unto Arcadian Pan.
Thou taughtst me thus to gaze upon the seas,
To listen to the ocean's vexed roar,
Or to the fountain's silver tune at eve.
Thou kindledst in my mind immortal fires,
Which had lain dormant till thou breathedst on them,
Fanning them into life; and I became
An emanation of thyself, my thoughts
Echoes of thine, — in tone the same, yet fainter.
I hear thy melody in all the gales,
Loving all things which thou dost love, — believing
That whilst I worship Nature in her charms

I offer up my silent vows to thee.
Wilt thou not pardon me?

SAPPHO.

Thou sweetest trespasser!
Seeking such pardon, how shall I requite.
I have woo'd Fame, and won her,—but believe,
Had she in fond caprice entwined my brow
With glory's halo, like yon lambent cloud
Bright'ning to starry myriads o'er our heads,
I would fling far my radiance to the winds,
And fly with thee to some lone wilderness,
Where never was the name of Sappho heard,
Where the rude Scythian sings his barbarous lay,
Leading his flocks to pasture midst the snows
That crown Mount Hæmus, — and would deem their wilds
And northern deserts Tempe's beauteous vale,
If thou, oh Phaon! smiledst upon me there.

PHAON.

But thou art here with me, and bright with fame,
As if thy temples wore their starry crown —
The Ariadne of the Lesbian shore.

SAPPHO.

Mine own loved isle! Oh what delicious nights
Are ours of Mitylene!—Wonder not,
Ye colder climes, that thus our hearts run o'er
With soft emotions, and our minds awake
To the perception of all beauteous things.
The very airs that wanton round our coasts
Are poetry, and the warm smiles which rear
In our ripe vales the olive and the vine,
Nurse in our hearts those deep impassion'd thoughts,
That wild abandonment to happiness,
Breathed in the music of the Lesbian lyre.

PHAON.

Yet do the Greeks impute it as a crime.
They say unhallow'd fires do blight our bays,
And deem us more voluptuous than sage.

SAPPHO.

And what is wisdom, but a vivid sense
Of all the rich gifts of immortal Jove?
To feel to the inmost core, love, virtue, fame,

And all the tender sympathies of life—
Ay—even our human sufferings. Do the brutes
Feel thus?— Have they, like us, the vision
Internal of vast mind? Love they as we?
Each mates him with his kind, because 'tis thus
Nature hath will'd it; but feel they her charms?
Do they adore the seas, the vales, the skies,
And all the varied stores existence opes?
Nor feel the Grecians like to us of Lesbos.
The vein of poesy, it ne'er did glow
Warm in my heart, until I own'd your sway,
Ethereal Beauty, and supremest Love!
Ye were my spring of Castalie—the fount
From whence the tide of inspiration flow'd.
And then I worshipp'd as the Cyprian did,
When came the goddess blushing to his shores
In all the graceful consciousness of power.
I do her homage wheresoe'er she dwells:
Bid me not gaze upon the starlight heavens,
For they are beautiful!

[*The moon is seen rising from behind a hill crowned with olives.*

PHAON.

Mark in the east
The horizon brightens with a roseate hue,
Flinging its faint reflections o'er the waves.
Lo! from her Cynthian altars comes
Crescented Dian — daughter of great Jove.

SAPPHO.

How swiftly fly the hours! Brief time it seems,
Since, standing on this very spot, we hail'd
Her last fair rising from her eastern shrine,
And watch'd her whilst she journey'd to the west,
Where, in the ocean's haze, her blushing brow,
As in a bridal veil, she did conceal,
Like old Icarius' daughter on the shore,
Veiling her fond shame from her father's eyes.
How brief the hours! She sinks to rise again
Each night on her dominion o'er the skies, —
But we, born but to gleam and pass away,
When spent the limits of our fleeting lives,
Hang, like sweet Iris' many-colour'd bow,
Our days as varied as its blended haze,
Baseless between earth's fabric and the heavens.

But Love! immortal Love, has lent his smile —
The golden light that gilds the changeful hues, —
The first to brighten and the last to fade:
And Beauty with her roseate blush is there,
To crown our cup of evanescent joy.

PHAON.

'Twould seem thy emblem of existence beareth
No dark'ning line of sorrow in its zone.

SAPPHO.

Ay, but it doth, alas! and I will liken
That tenderest tint of sapphire to thine eyes,
When I have seen them tremulous with tears.
But thy tears are not all of grief, untemper'd
By the warm ray of passion; thou hast wept
When I have sung to thee in Lydian mode, —
And I have felt them fall upon my heart
As evening dews descend on Ætna's groves.

[*A nightingale starts into voice from a neighbouring tree.*

Hymn'st thou pale Hecate, minstrel of the night?
Wild are thy notes as lay by Syrinx tuned,
And soft as those the lyre of Orpheus breathed, (1)

When the caressing winds did steer its course
From Hebrus' savage shores to thine Methymna.
Daughter of Pandion, thou'rt no hireling bard, —
No rude profaner of Euterpe's reed: —
I will essay a rival strain with thee.

SAPPHO *sings.*

Hail to thee, Spirit of the Universe!
Immortal ray of beauty, thou that rovest
For ever and for ever round our shores.
Hail to thee, Nature! veil'd in deep'ning shades,
Reposing calm beneath the watchful stars.
Hail to thee, Cynthia! smiling o'er the seas,
Whose grateful billows lift their crystal arms
And offer up to thee their argent crowns,

Which thou didst late steep in thy silver font,
And fling to them down from thine azure throne,
In token of supremacy, and bound
Them as a princess binds her prostrate slaves,
To do thee homage in their glittering chains.
Hail, goddess! Thou, where sea-born Delos rears
His proud brow o'er the waters, comest thence
To meet our Lesbian vows. — Pure Cynthia, hail!

Hail thou, Ægean! gemm'd with graceful isles;
Thy breast hath borne full many a gallant prow.
And hail, Æolian shores, that sweetly send
By the soft waves melodious greeting here.
And hail my native Lesbia! on whose hills
Aurora loosens to the winds her robes;
And great Apollo, from his golden bow,
Shoots the first shaft into the morning air.

And hail to thee! who makest the heart thy shrine,
Eternal Love! — for ever be my lyre,
As my impassion'd accents, tuned to thee!
And let me sing of thee when sleep the gales,
As now they slumber in the myrtle groves,
And Ocean curbs within the caves his strength;
And read thy language in the stars, and be,
Immortal Love! for aye thy votary.

SCENE II.

The summit of a cliff overhanging the sea on the Island of Lesbos.

SAPPHO *alone.*

Again, and yet again, I gaze from hence,
Dragging my weary footsteps to this height
With a sick spirit hast'ning to despair.
What see I but the wide and sparkling brine,
Or the blue zone of some fair distant isle,
Or watch the dolphins in their cumb'rous sport,
Jetting the waters. He comes not — nor comes
The bark I late did send to Sicily;
In vain I look for her home-veering sail.
'Tis strange! — the allotted time hath lapsed long,
The captious winds have favour'd her return,
And we have had no tidings of a storm, —
Yet comes she not. Perchance he hath delay'd
My messengers, that he may bring to me
Upon his own dear lips a kinder greeting.

Alas! how I do foster in my breast the germ
Of my destruction—feed my dying hopes
With idle phantasies. I know he will not,
Yet do I say unto my heart he will.
Bark of my fate! how oft, when some faint speck
Has deepen'd in yon verge, or sea-bird's wing
Hath sped athwart the brine, careering free
To its wild haunts, how have I felt my sight
Reel with expectant vision, and each pulse
In my o'er-wrought and aching heart rebel,—
And hope became to me a fearful thing.
Thou bark of destiny! I watch for thee,
As gazed the Athenian father from the rock
Until the winds brought back the Cretan freight—
They came—and what brought they to sad Ægeus?—
Death!

Enter CLEIS *and* MEGARA *conversing.*

Thy cheek is pale, my Cleis. Comest thou here
The harbinger of ill?—My heart forebodes.

CLEIS.

I fain would speak the words, but cannot.—Speak
Thou, Megara.

SAPPHO.

Ay speak! speak both, or one, — ye scare my soul
With looking on your blenched aspects. Speak! —
Why do ye turn away your gaze and weep?

MEGARA.

They have decreed your banishment from Lesbos. (2)

SAPPHO.

And is this *all* the fearful news ye bring?
Benignant gods! — But art thou sure, Megara,
No storms lower dark beneath this summer rain.
Say ye not aught of Sicily, my Cleis?

CLEIS.

Nor sound nor sign hath reach'd us from Sicilia —
Nor bark hath come, nor seaman to our shores:
But we have heard this which we tell to thee,
That Pittacus hath banish'd from his realm
Alcæus, and all those who did unite
Their fates with him, joining him in revolt,
On pain of death, within brief time to flee:
And we, alas! are number'd with the exiled.

SAPPHO.

And wherefore weep, my friends?—hath Greece no plains
As fair as these of Mitylene? — If so,
We'll steer our course to soft Sicilia's isle,
Whose vales are lovely as the eye may view;
Or if they look'd upon us bleak with storms,
Yet would we hail them, for we shall be free:
And I shall there behold him! — How my heart
Doth measure the vast space bounding my sight,
And wing away to Sicily and Phaon!

CLEIS.

Yet is it sad to leave the groves we love, —
The birds who sing to us their evening lay, —
The vales where first the early blooms of spring
Have met the eager search, — the shores where stray'd
Our infant steps, sporting amidst the rocks
Whose reefy cliffs did yield their envied stores —
The sea-flowers, and the onyx, and the shells.
Oft have I skimm'd along these golden sands,
In childish play, and loved to mark the tide
Leaving its white surge on the wavy beach,
Whilst I did feel my naked spell-bound feet

Laved by its gentle waters. It is sad
To leave, as we do leave, perhaps for ever,
These haunts, the scenes of our departed joys.

SAPPHO.

My beauteous Cleis, thy young heart shall find
The spring flowers grow as fair in Ætna's vales —
The graceful myrtle bloom on Enna's plain;
And there the nightingales will sing as wild,
For they will warble round Cyane's fount;
And the waves mourn as sweetly on the strand,
Yielding to thy white hand, my gentle Cleis,
In greeting love, their bright, deep-hidden treasures;
And thou wilt rest all night upon my heart,
And share my love with Atthis and Megara.

(*To* MEGARA.)

Sweet friend, say, wilt thou fly with us?

MEGARA.

Ay — even to death!

SAPPHO.

Then farewell native Mitylene — thou
First object of my fondness: thou hast been

To me a not ungentle nurse; — but now
That Fortune frowns on me, and Fate puts on
Her Proteus forms, and stern Oppression drives
Me from thy shores, — thou leavest me to roam,
An outcast on the earth, where'er I list.
Nor dost thou weep, but wear'st, as flatt'rers wear
In servile courts, thine everlasting smile;
Nor sharest in our griefs — so fare thee well! —
Yet have they left me those I love, and
I do thank them. — Now to Sicily.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A grove near the residence of SAPPHO *in Sicily.*

Enter ATTHIS *and* MEGARA.

ATTHIS.

And sawest thou then their meeting?

MEGARA.

Do not my eyes bear witness by their tears?
Alas! I saw them, or I had not deem'd

There lived the heartless thing could so have spurn'd her.
She met him with that deep devotedness,
That humble, pale, imploring look of love,
Fearing to vex by importunities
The being so adored. She met him thus,
And fixed her dark and speaking eyes on him,
And utter'd such sweet sounds—thou know'st, my Atthis,
The melting pathos of her words and tones,—
How they do thrill the soul, raising emotions
Which no external beauty could awake.
She knelt to him, she did embrace his feet;
And humbly pray'd him but to look on her
Yet once again as he was wont to do.
Oh! how my heart did burn to see her thus
Debased before a stripling, who but borrows
A little light from her illustrious name,
As the pale planets radiance from the sun.

ATTHIS.

How spake he then? Did he not worship her?

MEGARA.

He drew his robe from her beseeching grasp,
And turn'd on her a proud and chilling eye

Which might have glass'd the waters of the sea;
And said to her, such posture seem'd her ill.
And he did counsel her for her fair fame —
Oh! was't not nobly done? — And bade her spare
Her words and tears, — and said it had been well
If she had never come to Sicily.
Was it not kindly urged? — And yet the while
He look'd so beautiful in his high scorn,
Bearing him like to a triumphant god,
That I did fear to love while I abhorr'd him.

ATTHIS.

Oh perjured Phaon!
Oh! fatal dowry that did gift thee thus, (3)
Yet leave thee cold and soulless as the image
Of thy fair form reflected in the wave.
But how did Sappho brook his proud disdain?

MEGARA.

At first she did abandon her to grief,
With all that keen intensity which spirits
So finely temper'd do experience —
Boundless and desperate, and forming such
A fearful contrast with their dreams of bliss,

That we do tremble whilst we gaze on them.
Then grasp'd she at a faint hope which did gleam,
Or had its birth in her creative mind,
Shadowy and fleeting — and she clung to it
Until its wan rays in her vision grew
Beautifully distinct. She raised her brow,
Which she had droop'd upon my neck, and flung
Her tresses back, through which her tearful eyes
Had shone like meek orbs half eclipsed by rains,
And fix'd them upon mine, as if she sought
There to confirm th' illusions she had raised;
And said to me, " This is not what it seems —
" 'Tis but some wayward mood that sways him.
" I know he will relent when I do sing
" To him the strains he used to love in Lesbos.
" He means not thus, Megara."

ATTHIS.

Alas!
How briefly will this ray which she hath stolen
From fair Elysium light her unto Hades!

MEGARA.

Alas! alas how soon!
We are but late return'd from that strange meeting,
And now she hies her to yon viny shade
To rest, — so would she have us think; — but I
Do know she only wanders there to weep.

ATTHIS.

And well might they whose hearts are free from care
Rest in Sicilia's groves. How beautiful
The sweet short summer nights do kiss her plains,
Drawing a veil so lucid o'er their charms,
That when the amorous sun doth rend it thence
With his impatient touch, we do lament.
Methinks all here, Megara, might be blest.
How Nature hath her genius versatile
Display'd; how varied are her works! —
The wild fantastic, and the great sublime.
There the fond flowers bloom midst the lava rocks,
Like hope midst desolation. — Here that pale
And delicate blossom, cresting the green stem

* The Arbutus.

That bears its buds and fruits, — sweet emblem of
The portion'd span of human life, ripe age,
Soft infancy, and youth's expanding pride.
And there, amidst the cedar and the vine,
Eternal Ætna lifts his torch of flame,
Awfully bright above his icy crown;
And beacons the blue sky, as on that night
Despairing Ceres there did kindle it,
To light her wanderings o'er the darken'd earth.

MEGARA.

Then turn we to the sea, whose girdling shores,
Fairer than pearl, — beset with emerald isles,
And promontories golden with the sun, —
Behind whose heights the long bright rays do fling
Into the skies rich hues of amethyst
And ruby, blended with the paling amber;
While the calm crystal, shrined as in a frame,
Doth offer up to Ætna's giant form
A mirror'd image of his mighty self.
Italia, — sweet Italia! unto thee
We turn our homage. — Græcia! where art thou?
Blue in the distance; — and far off, our eyes
Wandering in fancy's regions, do behold,

Dark o'er the waves, Alcides' pillars frown.
Beyond — 'tis wrapp'd in everlasting shades.

ATTHIS.

Yet is my spirit joyless, and my heart
Doth presage to itself all evil things:
In vain I strive to smile on these fair scenes
Blooming around me in such gentle guise.
My soul is very sad. — I deem'd that here,
Far from the factions of our native isle,
We should have dwelt in peace. Sweet friend,
Thou weep'st?

MEGARA.

I cannot choose but weep,
When she who cheer'd us with her light of love
Hath quench'd that light in sorrow. — Let us hence,
And offer her the tribute of our tears.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

Interior of the dwelling of SAPPHO *in Sicily.*

SAPPHO. MEGARA. ATTHIS. CLEIS.

SAPPHO.

There still is hope;
This last appeal which I have made to him
May, like the warm and genial ray that suns
The ice upon the mountains, reach his heart. —
And yet he might have come to me e'er now,
If but to tell me we no more may meet —
And that he doth renounce me. It is mercy,
When the barb'd arrow rankles in the wound,
To strike it deep into some mortal vein,
And free the dying victim from his throes.
'Tis near the hour of sunset — that bright line
Of saffron light that now illumes the west,
When I did send to him, it faintly sparkled
On the blue altars of the east. He comes not —
A little while, and yet a little while,

And I shall know my doom ; — for never — never,
If he do now abandon me, will I
Behold, or seek, or commune with him more !
To you, sweet friends, oh ! how shall I requite
Your love, which thus with unabated zeal
Sustains my sinking spirit. — I would fain
Repay you by a lighten'd heart. — I cannot !

[*She turns to* ATTHIS, *who is weaving garlands.*

Thou, dear Atthis,
Say, wherefore weavest thou, as for a bride
Upon the morning of her bliss, these chaplets ?

ATTHIS.

They are the latest that the summer hides
In her rich vales, I gather'd them with Cleis,
Near to the fountain of Cyane. Thou
Wert wont to love their odorous hues: and there
They bloom with fresher verdure, and the cool
And quiet shelter of the spot doth cherish
Some that brook not the fierce autumnal heats.

SAPPHO.

Give me the lily, —'tis a flower I love;
For it seems to me, midst its bower of leaves,

Like a pale pensive spirit who doth hide
Her sorrow from the gorgeous and the gay:
And when the zephyrs with their prying touch
Profane its crystal chalice, doth shed tears.
And I love Cytherea's flower of woe,
The blue anemone, — and that fair tribe
Who sun their golden tresses by the brooks,
Like to the Naiads, — and those that did spring
From the pure blood of Hyacinthus, slain
In luckless accident — for they do wave
Their sweet bells in the meadows, and, methinks,
Still at that hour when he was smote emit
A musical and melancholy sound.
But these all pined when late the violet died:
And now they all are gone, 'tis said, to mourn,
Self-sacrificed, upon the tomb of May.

ATTHIS.

But yet remains to us the rose, who loves (4)
Our vales so well, that though she died with Spring,
Her spirit comes with the autumnal air.
And here I place her near the amaranth,
A fond flower that doth haunt all sacred shades, —
And here I twine thy bright and gracile stem,

Pale rhododaphne *, genius of the grove!
Strangely contrasted with the gaudy pride
Of Juno's poppies.

SAPPHO.

Findest thou no place
For the green ivy, who doth fling her arms
O'er lonely tombs and desolated fanes,
Caressing them in ruin? — I will wreathe her
Meet coronal for mine.

[*She wanders into the vestibule which looks on the sea.*

The hour, the airs, the perfumes are the same
As when I stood with Phaon on the shore,
That last — last night he loved me! — Then, as now,
The sun sunk down in glory, and the waves
Did sigh along the beach melodiously.
The temple, and the altar, they are there—
The incense rises to the sparkling skies—
But where the spirit that I worshipp'd? — Gone!
It was a well remember'd night, the eve
Of Dian's festival, when nations hail
The coming steps of Flora and young Spring.

* The Rose-laurel.

Now verge we on the autumn's calmer reign;
The scene has varied, so hath Phaon changed;—
But I am changeless ever, save in hopes,
Which then were high, but now do glare on me
Like yonder fires of Ætna, desperate,—
Or mock me,—the wan phantoms of the past.
Bring here thy harp, Megara, that like thee
Has been so sweet a soother of my thoughts
When they were troubled,—as the gentle moon
Doth rule with her mild sceptre the rude waves
When they would rage, and break from Ocean's bounds.
Bring here thy harp, Megara.

MEGARA.

It hath tones
Which are all thine, and come forth at thy call.
What shall I sing to thee?

SAPPHO.

Some lay
Of love and loneliness, and breaking hearts
And broken vows. Some strain like that
Mount Ida's echoes did so wildly sing,
When sad Œnone pined herself away

For the false son of Priam. Any tale
Of wretchedness and wrongs. There is a tomb
Upon Leucadia's steep; say, dost thou know
Who rests within it?

MEGARA.

I have heard
It was erected o'er that Carian queen
Who loved too well, and perish'd.

SAPPHO.

Sing of her ——

[*At this moment a dove which* SAPPHO *had despatched to* PHAON *returns to her: she unfastens a billet from its neck.*

Mine eyes would pierce thy secrets,
But dare not look on thee. I break thy seal,
Oh fatal billet! — and thus seal my doom.

[*Reads.*

ATTHIS (*aside to* CLEIS).

With what an eager glance doth she devour it;
Sure all is well, her aspect is so calm.

CLEIS.

There is a deepening flush upon her brow,—
And look—oh look! — it changes. Oh Megara!

[SAPPHO *flings herself upon the earth: they hasten to her.*

MEGARA.

Pale even as the grave! He hath destroy'd her!

SAPPHO.

Alas—alas!
Would that he had. Yet is all as I deem'd.
His last look when we parted told me all—
(When we did part that eve in Mitylene);
His half-averted eye, and silvery words,
Warm to the ear, but icy to the heart—
I knew—I knew, and yet would not believe!

[*Gives the billet to* MEGARA.

Read it—oh read it! Tell it to the winds.
Let Ætna's cavern'd billows that do lash
Their sulphurous shores proclaim unto the earth
That Sappho is abandon'd to her shame!

MEGARA *reads the billet.*

" I greet thee for the last time, since that thou
" Hast so required of me that I do write;
" Deeming, perchance, because my years are few,
" So is my nature fickle, and that I
" May be again to thee the thing thou wouldst.
" I might entreat of thee, but that I know
" Thou art too much above my poor advice,
" To banish from thy mind the idle past,
" And be again the cloudless star thou wast.
" I am no ingrate; but I cannot curb
" My passions to thy pleasures, nor pretend
" With mean deceit I e'er can love thee more.
" Farewell, — forgive, — be wiser, and be blest."

Oh most perfidious words! — still more
False heart that gave them utterance. Cast him forth
From thy too generous bosom — let him sink
Into his native nothingness, and be
Again, as he doth urge, thy glorious self.
We who have seen how he hath dimm'd thy light,
We; who are jealous for thee of renown, —
Think, oh my Sappho! how we have deplored.

Raise to its genial sphere thy noble mind,
And triumph o'er his baseness.

SAPPHO.

'Tis too late!

Megara, 'tis too late! As yonder orb
Sinks down in shades, so hath my genius set,
Never to brighten more! Thy heart is fond,
Yet hast thou never loved as I have loved:
Oh! there are spirits of such o'er-wrought essence,
They make to themselves whirlwinds where the meek
Would find but adverse gales—of such is mine.

* * *

ATTHIS.

Is there no hope?

SAPPHO.

Ay—one,
That my heart will be poison'd with the food
It made its daily nutriment, and wither.

MEGARA.

But thou art so beloved—hath life no charms?

Thou who hast seen such glimpses of Elysium
In Nature's aspect, are they all departed?

SAPPHO.

I dream'd—'twas in past years—that if my life
Might glide away in such a vale as this,
Midst perfumes and repose, with my soft lyre,
And the wild flowers, and birds, and evening gales,
Stealing alone upon my solitude,
That such existence were Elysium. Then
When my fond eyes had gazed upon thy smiles,
Megara, and my lips had known the charms
Of thine, dear Atthis; or thy young warm breast
My gentlest Cleis, with its budding beauty
Clinging so close to me as now it doth;—
I thought that I had found that fabled treasure
Converting all around to happiness.
But Phaon's love hath taught me—strange reverse—
To revel in delight—despair, and die!

SCENE V.

A wild ravine of Mount Ætna.

SAPPHO, *alone.*

I seem to stand upon the brink of death,
Whose dark abyss, hollow'd midst molten rocks
By the unceasing dash of torrents, yawns,
Tomb-like, to welcome me. A frightful chasm!
My eyes turn dizzy with the wheeling foam
Which, boiling ever in its murky cauldron,
Sends up even to this height a cloud of steam.
My ears are deafen'd by its constant roar;
And my feet totter on the cavern'd earth
Trembling beneath them; from whence comes by fits
Sepulchral sounds: — yet here, where chaos reigns,
And the wild elements contend for empire,
Hath the fair cedar cast its anchoring roots,
And the tall pine, the chestnut, and the oak,
Here flourish, midst the green funereal boughs

Of the dark yew, spanning the horrid gulf,
Till the white foam doth crest its scarlet berries.
There is a fearful grandeur in the place —
Some Genius dwells here who, methinks, imbues
The region he hath chosen with his essence.
Awfully beautiful! Those beetling rocks,
Trammel'd with roots, bear scars upon their fronts, —
Signs of that fiery warfare Ætna wages
In his insatiate hate with all around.
And these deep rents of the earth, methinks, proclaim,
As with a trumpet's voice, the unequal onset.
But now he pauses, holding sullen truce;
Yet his fierce eye burns with its lurid flame,
And his hot breath breathes forth his enmity;
And down he sends his wild and swollen floods,
Hoary with snows, to deluge and o'erwhelm.

I stand and gaze, and mark the cedar fall,
Hurl'd from its long debated throne; and see
Its branches plough the gurgling tide below;
I hear the secrets whisper'd from the caves,
Telling of wrath and ruin yet to come.
I fear not — I do feel my mind wound up

To a strange harmony with that I look on.
I soar above the troubles of the earth
And mingle with the higher elements;
Becoming, as it were, myself a part
Of the destroying and distracted power,
Joying alike in both. 'Tis strange
That I, who turn'd me with a sick disgust
From Nature when she smiled in gentlest guise,
Wooing me with a sweet and kind caress,
Should feel my anguish soften'd by her frowns;
My torments soothed almost to pensiveness,
When she repulses me with all her terrors.
Oh! that I could become what now I seem—
A bodiless part of the great whole which takes
Of me these fleeting moments such dominion;—
Forget myself, and live but in the ray
Of blended hues arching the sheet of foam;
Or in the rude winds singing midst the pines,
Or in the echo of the cataract's roar,
Vibrating in my every pulse, or aught
But that I am——

[*A volume of smoke and flame bursts from the crater of Ætna, followed by a shower of burning cinders.*

Behold the tyrant breaks
Even now his treacherous amnesty, and sends
Again his fierce and fiery legions forth,
To pillage and destroy. The leaves all turn
White in their ghastly fear, and fling them down
Like cowards prostrate on the withering earth.
But I do welcome you, ye scorching rains;
Fall on my naked brow, and sear my brain,
Consume the fatal tablet of the past,
And leave your burning impress on my heart;
Or kindle there a bright eternal torch,
To scare the spectre that doth haunt me thence.
I have had thoughts and stirring impulses
Urging me, in the acme of despair,
To hurl me from the summit of some cliff,
As yon, and float on the chaotic waves,
Like to the ivy riven from its crest,
Senseless and powerless; or to dash my form
Against some rugged precipice's side,
Until I startle life from out my heart.
Then have I thought, Leucadia, of thy rock,
And dream'd that could I drink deep of the tide
Laving thy hidden base, I might even yet
Revive to fair existence, and become

Again what once I was — the proud — the blest:
Such visions have been mine. ——

[*Another and more appalling shower of fire and stones descends, and* SAPPHO *is obliged to take refuge in a cave of the mountain.*

SCENE VI.

Interior of the Cavern.

HIPPARCHUS, *alone.*

This seems thee well, stern monarch, now thou speak'st
Unto the heedless in a voice which they,
Even they, must hear. Flame on — flame on,
Thou glorious furnace! Vomit forth thy fires —
Puff from thy nostrils pestilence and plagues,
And with thy vast disgorgings purge the earth.
Thy pangs do make sweet music to mine ears —
I joy to hear thy mighty depths resound
With their internal ragings; and I fain
Would have them mingled with the dying groans
Of perishing thousands. Strike him on the plain

Who tarries mindful of his numerous flocks—
Him of the city e'er he reach his home—
The sinner and the wretch who *would* have sinn'd;—
And oh! that thou couldst mount the despot's throne,
And smite him midst the scorpions that surround him:
The sycophants, the courteous, courtly things
Who spurn the starving suppliant from their gates,
And lick the dust of thrones, themselves more servile.
Smite them amidst their purple and their gold,
Their revel and debauch, and midnight treason,
And let them stand enchased in molten dross,
Eternal monuments of courts and crimes.

Enter SAPPHO.

Who art thou?—
What brings thee here? Ill-omen'd spirit—hence!

SAPPHO.

Dost thou not know me?

HIPPARCHUS.

How should I know thee? Thou art none of mine.

SAPPHO.

If thine are wretched, I am thine in truth.

HIPPARCHUS.

Who told thee I was wretched? Trouble not
Thyself with that thou hast no part in. Hence!

SAPPHO.

I do not come to pry into thy thoughts;
Nor would I rouse thine angry mood; I sought,
Not knowing thou wert here, a little shelter:
But since it is thy dwelling, I implore
That I may screen me here from yonder fires.

HIPPARCHUS.

I mind not to oppose thee; sit thee there—
I am not envious of thy company.

SAPPHO.

Alas! if thou didst know the very wretch
Thou harbour'st 'neath the roofing of thy cave,
Well mightst thou shun, and cast thy scorn at me.

HIPPARCHUS.

Art thou, too, stain'd with crimes? Hast thou grown rich,
And fed in sumptuous palaces? And quaff'd

The cup of pride until thy heart ran o'er?
And piped and danced till night out-stared the day,
And thou forgot'st the vows of early youth?

SAPPHO.

If it is crime to trust and be betray'd,
Then am I crimson'd to the very core.
If the base perfidy of those we love
Can make us, being victims of the guilt,
The sharers also, then am I most guilty.

HIPPARCHUS.

Thou, too, hast found a monster on the earth—
Oh! I did flatter me that mine was peerless.

SAPPHO.

Peerless I deem'd the being I so loved—
And if the outward impress might decide
The sterling value of the coin thus stamp'd,
He bears a noble price;—but plants do hide,
Albeit of foliage fair, and bud, and branch,
Oft in their roots, pernicious qualities;
And many a lake, that on its glassy surface
Reflects the imagery of vales and skies,

Buries within its depths destructive things.
I loved, I worshipp'd; I so twined my life
With countless mortal fibres round his heart,
That they must perish ere I can uncoil them.
I deem'd him all my own—his looks—his words—
His passions—pleasures—hatreds—all his thoughts
Which I myself had nurtured,—these I deem'd
Were mine, by that creative privilege
Which gives the artist absolute control
Over the sculptured image he hath form'd.
For him I did forego the voice of praise;
And pass'd the long hours others give to rest
In studying how I might exalt the nature
My fondness had identified with mine.
Even more,—for his sake I endured the breath
Of blighting scorn to wither up my bays,
And brook'd the pity or contempt of men.
But while the glory from by brow departs,
His name, his very faults become immortal
In that I have united them with mine.

HIPPARCHUS, *laughing sarcastically.*

Immortal!—Nay, now I do pity thee,
Who hast such bounded notions of the ray

Immutable, uncircumscribed, pervading heaven,
Its natural element, and glimmering here
Only in dim perspective. Impious thought!
That limits to the span of perishing worlds
The bright, the infinite, imperishable whole.
Glory! thou fatalist malady of the earth,
Seizing alike on sages and on fools,
Thou art a fever so incurable
That thou endurest from infancy till death:
Oh, vain chimera! then art thou dispell'd!
When rots i'the earth that garb of kindred earth,
Clogging the immortal intellect, the soul,
So sages name the emanated spark,
Doth wing its way back to that burning fount,
That centre of all life from whence it came;
Nor seems it larger in the haze of light,
With which it doth incorporate its lamp,
Than the small dew-drop ocean drinks at eve.
What then the fame of myriads of thy race?
Like to the fickle breath that blasts ye. Thou
Wilt go down sorrowing to an early grave;
Thy tresses bleach'd by winters never thine;
And they who spurn thee now will laud thee then,
And howl, and weep, and decorate thy bier.

Ay more—perchance in ages yet to come,
Some fool, in love with glory, like to thee,
May trill his barbarous lay, and tell the world
He sings as erst the Lesbian Sappho sung.
Fie on thee, child of earth!

SAPPHO.

Thou feel'st not—
How shouldst thou feel, for ills thou ne'er hast proved.

HIPPARCHUS.

I had a friend—what say I? Was not he
One whom I cherish'd more than mine own life?
We were the same in country and in state,
In stature, years, and once I thought in heart:
We fought beneath one buckler; that hard couch,
The war-cloak stretch'd upon the field of death,
Served us alike. We drank from out one cup;
Shared, in protracted abstinence, one crust;
If one did stem the flood, the other deeming
He went to meet his doom, would plunge there too,
Envious of death. So perfect was our friendship,
It soon became a proverb in the land,
To love as did Diocles and Hipparchus.

SAPPHO.

And ye were happy.

HIPPARCHUS.

Thou hast said—we were so—
But he grew covetous of Fortune's smiles;
I cared not so I could elude her frowns—
The quiet solace of domestic life
Was the sole boon I e'er required of Jove.
I saw my friend depart for Sicily;
Fame boasted far of the auspicious rays
That blazed around her tyrant's splendid throne.
Diocles went to grovel and grow great;
And for the prayers I gave him, left to me
A legacy of disappointed hopes.
I did invoke the gods for him, believing
Nor seas nor sovereigns, no—not Death himself
Could shake the union we commenced with life.
I deem'd—it boots not what—'tis idle all—
Our whole lives are a shock o' the elements—
And let it pass.——
I found another being
To love, not like Diocles; yet as pure,

Though more pertaining to my earthly nature.
I loved her as we love those gentler sounds
That soothe us with their plaintive influence,
And do imbue our spirits with their tones;
Not as we rouse us at the trumpet's peal,
Feeling our bosoms vibrate with its call,
Which is to man's a voice congenial:
I loved her, and was blest with her, in being
The fertile source of young and innocent lives
That would grow blest like us. How soon
Our transient beam of happiness departed!
The foe reign'd on our very hearths, usurping
The sacred altars of our household gods.
She whom I loved—a little while she cheer'd
My exile with her lone and lovely light;
It was not of this world, and sorrow quench'd it:
And famine robb'd my offspring of their bloom;
And they droop'd as the buds they late had scatter'd
Upon their mother's grave. All—all but thee,
My sweet Phaloe,—and thou yet remainedst
To cheat my fancy with a beauteous smile
Most like to hers, and eyes that were her own!
For thy sake I did send to Sicily;
Telling my prosperous friend of all my griefs,

And seeking of him — how it smote me then!
I thought his generous heart would bleed for me,
In memory of past years — some trifling boon:
Then sat me down, and waited in sick hope,
And watch'd the silent progress of decay
Sapping the beauty of my darling's cheek;
How pale disease did fix his subtle fang,
Like to a cruel vampyre, in her veins.

SAPPHO, *eagerly.*

Diocles — speak! — did he not fly to thee?

HIPPARCHUS.

I quell'd my pride and sailed for Sicily,
Deeming the greeting I had sent him fail'd.
The winds blew fair; I landed with fresh hopes —
My bosom glowing with confiding love.
'Twas strange — wherever I named him I sought,
Men's aspects blench'd; — the young were dumb with fear;
The aged turn'd away their filmed eyes,
And shook their few remaining locks, and said,
In cautious voice, he was a man of steel.
But I, too credulous, believed that he,

High in his sovereign's favour, might have roused,
Even by his strict adherence to the right,
An angry demon in the baser herd.
I took my pining infant in my arms,
And turn'd my footsteps towards his stately courts;
Nor did I marvel when his menials drove
Me from their gates. My pinch'd and haggard look —
My time-stain'd cloak, which wrapp'd with tatter'd folds
The wan and wailing creature on my breast,
Made us the very portrait of stern want.
But then I knew it was Diocles' home;
And sure some ear might recognise my name —
Hipparchus' name: how oft had his been heard
Mingled with blessings on my humble hearth!
And my soul rose in wrath — but then the thought,
How soon, if we could reach him, my poor babe
Would rest on couch of down, and all the skill
Of Sicily be summon'd to retard
The flight of her pure essence from the earth,
Did still my indignation; and I press'd
My earnest suit, despite the cold reply
Of "he receives none such as thee — begone!"
At last he came — I saw the glittering robes,
The festal crowns — I heard the minstrels play,

And felt the weight of perfumes in the air
Oppress my fainting sense; and midst the throng
Came forth Diocles, glorious as the sun.
Then saw I nought but he — with one wild start
I found that I had flung me in his path,
And that I held in my outstretched arms
That truest emblem of my wither'd heart.
I spoke not — breathed not — yet methought a voice
Did utter like some strange sepulchral sound
Deep in my breast — "Diocles! it is I."
I know not if he answer'd — yet methinks
I do remember, when he turn'd his eyes
Away from me, there was a blush of guilt.

SAPPHO.

Is't possible!
That heaven avenged thee not?

HIPPARCHUS.

I sat without the gate;
For they who stood around did mock at me,
And jeer as at a maniac in his freaks;
And said I wore a very courtier's smile,
And marvell'd that their lord should be so coy.

But soon their insults perish'd on my ear,
My sight forgot the pageant that had pass'd;
I sat me on the earth and gasp'd for breath,
And saw upon my poor Phaloe's brow
A burning tear — I blush'd to call it mine.
They who look'd on did fling to us some food
They scarce had given to their ravening dogs;
But for her sake I did accept and thank them.
But 'twas too late! — a few brief days ago
And it had come to us like healing balm.
It came too late — I gazed on thy thin cheek,
My beautiful Phaloe! and beheld
A wan smile that distorted — not like thine —
Oh! 'twas not thine, but Death's; who joy'd to rend
Thee from my heart. Still did thy little hands
Fondle my face, as thou wouldst say, " Once more —
" Once more e'er we do part, I own thy care."
I gazed on her, I hoped she only slept —
That fearful smile departed, and her lips
Reposed all calm and changeless. I gazed on
Till my sight reel'd, and I did comprehend
That I sat there beside the gate — *alone*,
And drew my mantle o'er her stiffening form,

And like a miser hoarded up my grief. —
Thou weep'st for me! yet have my eyes no tears.

SAPPHO.

Thy wrongs might win those fiery showers from heaven!

HIPPARCHUS.

Mark'st thou yon withering leaves?
That is my lair — I couch me where she sleeps —
My buried one. I held her to my heart
Until the smell o'the earth was on those lips
Once balmy as the morn; and that I loved
Became a fearful and a loathsome thing.
I lay me there to rest, and each night see
A little pale and solitary star,
Rise in the darkness, — 'tis her spirit comes
To cheer me with its soft celestial light,
And soon 'twill guide me hence!

SAPPHO.

I marvel much
That thou endurest thy wrongs, nor break'st thy chains:
Life hath a thousand tortures, death but one.

HIPPARCHUS.

My life is in the hands of Jove who gave it,
Not mine own.

SAPPHO.

I have heard
Of courage as it reigns on fields of blood;
And hardiness to meet death i'the storm;
And firmness with the dagger or the bowl:
But ne'er did meet with courage like to thine,
That sits down unavenged.

HIPPARCHUS.

All things avenge me.
Time in his sullen course; men's crimes, which roll
Back on themselves; my heart which never plays
The traitor to itself, but curses all
Bearing similitude of him who wrong'd me,
With never ceasing and relentless hate;
Even Death, who did despoil me, takes his dart
And doth avenge me hourly on mankind.
I might go forth with frantic voice and mien,
And rave and threat till I went mad and perish'd,

And found a dog's death in some filthy ditch,
With this inscription, " Here the Maniac lies."
But I am too refined in my revenge
To vent my hoarded venom in wild words:
I sit and cherish it, here, in my heart,
And listen to great Ætna's voice, which speaks
In wrath more sure and terrible than mine;
And hear cabals in his infernal depths —
How the fiends plot perdition to the earth.
And I have made a solemn league with him
Who rules the burning fount, and sends even now
Congenial signs. —
It may be I shall die
Shrined in the lava rocks, from whence my soul,
Like to the Phœnix from his flaming pyre,
Shall wing away to regions of the sun,
Leaving nor wreck nor monument behind. —

SCENE VII.

Outside the Cave.

Enter MEGARA *and* ATTHIS *from below.*

ATTHIS.

She is not here. I call'd, but Ætna's caves
Alone replied to me. — At such an hour
'Twere wild to venture on.

MEGARA.

I know that she is here; the very rocks,
Frowning around us, tell me she is here.
Those hideous gulfs might woo her to their arms —
It is the very spot that she would choose.

Enter SAPPHO *from the cavern.*

SAPPHO.

Alas! what do ye here? I sought these wilds
But for myself, nor would that ye should brave

Their awful terrors. I am very faint —
My brain doth reel—my eyes know not your features—
Alas!—

MEGARA.

Thou'rt waxing wan as death!

[SAPPHO *swoons.*—*The shrieks of* ATTHIS *and* MEGARA *bring* HIPPARCHUS *from the cave: he sees* SAPPHO *prostrate on the ground.*

HIPPARCHUS.

Let her alone, prithee disturb her not.
Oh that the earth bore ever fruits like this!

ATTHIS.

Hast thou no human feeling?

HIPPARCHUS.

More than hast thou; for I would not awake her
To an existence she doth execrate.
Will not one pang suffice?

[*Returns to his cave.*

SCENE VIII.

Temple of Apollo Leucadius.

Enter two Priests.

SECOND PRIEST.

She was here even now, and did enroll
Her name amongst the many who come here
To prove our far famed rock.

FIRST PRIEST.

Took she the oath?
The irrevocable oath, before the shrine?
Perchance she may retract. Leucate woos
His lovers to his bed in guise ungentle,
And few survive his grasp.

SECOND PRIEST.

If thou hadst seen
How deep upon her brow Despair had set
His burning signet, thou wouldst feel no doubts.

The gripe of death had not more nipt her life
Than it is nipt already. She came here
With an unshrinking eye, and steps that stay'd
The shuddering form of a pale beauteous being
Who clung to her, hiding her weeping eyes
In Sappho's bosom; till her long fair tresses,
Which Cytherea might have envied, sunn'd
The marble steps before Apollo's fane.
Methinks I never look'd upon such eyes
As hers, then fix'd upon the face of Sappho;
Their tremulous blue was like the twilight heavens
Meeting and mourning o'er the darken'd earth.
She spake not; but when Sappho took the oath
She clasp'd her arms about the pedestal,
And her lips turn'd more ghastly than its white—
Then utter'd she one shriek—relax'd her hold,
And sank in Sappho's arms.

First Priest.

But moved her not
From her fix'd purpose?

Second Priest.

None might do that,
Or she had done it.

FIRST PRIEST.

'Tis well —
Our calling, by such prodigals of life,
Doth prosper, gaining great repute. Her name
Will render our Leucadian steep immortal,
And bring the wealth of Crœsus to our shores.

SECOND PRIEST.

Ay — if she live —

FIRST PRIEST.

Ay — if she perish! Is't not all the same? —
There will be left enow upon the earth
To fool away their lives, and buy renown —
So they will think — by perishing like Sappho.

SECOND PRIEST.

Yet do I lament.

FIRST PRIEST.

Grieve on —
And thou mayst soon breed sorrow for thyself.

[*Voice without calling Second Priest.*

Thou'rt called. — Away —
Anon she'll come to offer sacrifice.

[*Exit Second Priest.*

Ill fit art thou for thy vocation. They
Who would aspire to rule the minds of men
Must cast away, as an encumb'ring garb,
Such vain relentings, and become all stone,
Like to the deities whose mimes they are:
Pass the long nights in framing miracles;
Make merchandise of destinies and deaths;
Have creeds and gods for all credulities.
If we deceived them not, their phantasms would
If we destroy'd them not, their passions would.
What recks it then? A few brief years of life,
Sway'd by illusions, torn by cureless griefs,
And crowning all by some rash desperate act,
Beseeming well the pageant play'd before.
But spirits of our order, while the earth
Remains the theatre of life, shall cheat
Men with chimeras, and amuse the senses
With shadows, it may be of varied hues,
Differing in names, assuming Proteus forms,
But being still mere shades, fit for their worship.
We raise to them perspectives of the future;

Kindle suns in Elysium—hurl them thence,
And quench them in Tartarean gulfs. For Sappho,
I deem'd she was above our influence.

[*Exit.*

SCENE IX.

Summit of the Leucadian promontory.

SAPPHO. MEGARA.

SAPPHO.

To-morrow! and this impulse which I feel,
This sense mysterious of sight and being,
This ocean of vast thought that never sleeps,
These pulses which do throb with burning passions,
May be, as they had never been — extinct:
Buried within that ever open tomb
Gaping for life; or, in the ethereal element,
Floating a disembodied vital breath —
Mingling at will with the celestial airs,
Or adding beauty to the bright on earth.

That is a glorious thought, Megara. Thou
Mayst recognise again my mental ray,
The spirit thou so lovedst, in some fair form
Or emanated radiance of the stars.
Thou Hidden Source of life and intellect!
Great Genius of the universe! if throned
Where seems to our dull vision the fertile spring
Of light creative, in the sun, — or hidden,
As some do think, deep in those polar shades,
Where none of earth may penetrate, — I go
To seek thee, and to find — or feel no more
This restless, this unsatisfied desire.

MEGARA.

If thus, my Sappho, wherefore brave the peril?
There yet is time — oh! find thou some kind plea,
However vague, to cancel thy rash vow.

SAPPHO.

And live to what? — Despair! Oh think not thou
My firm resolves so soon do blench and yield.
There is but one way left — I will essay it.
It seems to me distraction rules the world; —
Wherever hearts trust, they are broke; — where'er

There is devoted love, it is betrayed:
And none in peace do dwell on this fair earth
But they who, brute-like, crawl and vegetate.
Whate'er I love turns traitor and departs: —
The love I would requite meets but the boon
Of withering sorrow that o'erflows my heart.
Such have I been to thee, Megara: thou,
With tenderness surpassing mortal love,
Hast clung to me through life — and now thou goest,
Like a young vine, to sanctify my tomb.
Think not I fear to fathom that dread gulf: —
'Tis not because my dizzy sight recoils,
Or that at times a natural instinct thrills
Through my yet mortal frame, that I retract; —
Think not that when my eyes seek yonder mound
Where Artemisia sleeps, I fear her fate —
I look on these as we on all things dwell
That with our natures do assimilate.
I feel no pang save when I gaze on thee,
And think that thou wilt droop o'er Sappho's bier.
The height I measure from hence to the sea,
The shrieking of the sea-birds in the clefts,
The dashing of the white foam 'gainst the rocks,
With ominous thunder, — these affright me not —

But nerve my mind to a congenial tone:
Yet, when as late we trod yon gentler beach,
Where the waves murmur sadly on the shore, —
Then was my soul subdued; methought they met
The greeting beauty of the strand, as friends
Who meet for one embrace, then part for ever!

MEGARA.

For ever! — say will Death so sunder us?

SAPPHO.

I go to prove his power.

MEGARA.

Oh, should it be supreme!

SAPPHO.

Love is supreme; and he may conquer Death —
And I may live again for thee, and gaze
With brighten'd eyes upon the glorious face
Of Nature, who received my infant homage,
And now doth take, if it must be, my last.
Farewell, thou worshipp'd deity! — With thee
Have I held sweet communion, I have walk'd

With thee in sunset glades, where gentle spirits
Offer up incense by the flowers distill'd
From their pellucid veins. I gave thee then
Tears of delight, and now I weep despair.
Yet, oh receive! e'er I depart, my vows
As of a dying votaress to her god!

[*To* MEGARA.

When I am gone, take thou my lyre, whose chords (5)
Shall then have perish'd; and when thou hast rear'd
A cippus on that very spot, where late
Phaon renounced me, oh suspend it there!
It may be, when in after days bards die
Heart-broken, they will choose this my device,
To hallow and perpetuate their wrongs.

MEGARA.

Oh! thou dost speak
With awful certainty of Death!

SAPPHO.

I go
To play with him a dark and dubious game.
Be thou, Megara, heir of all my love:
Oblivion, set thy seal upon my woes.

 [*Exeunt.*

SCENE X.

The Coast of Leucadia, opposite Cephalenia.

Enter IMBRIUS *and* LYNCEUS.

IMBRIUS.

The voice that fill'd
All Greece with its impassion'd lays is hush'd!

LYNCEUS.

The Lesbian star hath set in endless shades—
Sappho is gone for ever!

IMBRIUS.

How the waves
Roll calmly on, unconscious of their guilt—
Leucadia—oh Leucadia! not in vain
Has thy fame journey'd to far realms:—thou art
A cure omnipotent for cureless grief.

LYNCEUS.

I watch'd her from the waves; mine eyes saw not
The fearful drama acted on the height.
Where wert thou station'd?

IMBRIUS.

Even on its brink
These arms with impulse vain were wide out-stretch'd
To hold her from destruction. Oh ye gods!
Even yet I feel each fibre of my frame
Quivering from that intense and painful strife —
The will to act, and doubtful right of action.
And when she verged on it ——

LYNCEUS.

I had given
An empire's wealth to have beheld her then.

IMBRIUS.

I saw her as she stood upon the cliff
The Genius of the spot — her splendid eye
O'er her calm hueless features flashing bright
As lightnings midst the chaos of despair;

Her lineaments impress'd in passion's mint,
Telling the heart the history of her woes.
She from the temple came, midst weeping forms
Looking on her their last — and priests who urged
Her footsteps to that precipice of fate —
And gazers who throng'd there, and fix'd on her
Their eyes, as they were greedy of her death.
I saw her as she stood upon the cliff, —
Her hair unloosed to revel with the winds,
Or span with silken coils her fairy height;
Her forehead bore no coronal of flowers,
Her hand no harp (its chords, they say, all broke
When Sappho perish'd). On the cliff she stood,
And threw her gaze into the gulf beneath,
As they who fight first measure with the foe.
I see her ever as I saw her then, —
Her tresses on the gale, her arms outspread,
Her figure poised but by her slender foot,
Her eyes fix'd on the glorious heavens, her lips
Breathing their last and passionate adieu.

LYNCEUS.

Great Jove! did none relent?

IMBRIUS.

There came a creature from amidst the crowd,
So fragile, so unearthly, and so fair,
We deemed it was a spirit who had grown
Out of the elements. Her parted lips
Would fain have utter'd words; her looks
Spake that her lips refused; her speed was swift
As the wing'd winds; — she came to Sappho's feet,
And laying on her robe a hand as cold
And white as Parian stone, did cry to her,
" Yet once again! yet once again! hear me,
" Or perish both!" And then she link'd her arms
So firm round Sappho, that although they were
Most delicately form'd, thou wouldst have said
They like to wax might yield — no human force
Could ever have unclasp'd them. Sappho turn'd,
And the inspired light that late had play'd
About her features, vanish'd as a dream —
And tears fell glist'ning midst the long fair locks
Shading that angel brow; — and in a voice
That might have pierced the skies, she did reply,
" Would thou hadst spared me this!" But she who knelt
Low at her feet heard not. I could have pray'd

When they removed her senseless from the rock,
She ne'er might wake again. Thou know'st the rest,
How Sappho plunged into the realms of space,
Like a young eagle for the first time leaving
His eyry for the skies.

LYNCEUS.

She soar'd, then fell—
And as she fell, did baffle with the air,
Striving for mastery, till her senses reel'd;
And sightless, powerless, to the waves she came,
Which closed above her, jealous of such spoil.
Then the rocks echo'd one concordant shriek,
First rising on the thronged height, which we,
Launch'd on the waters, sympathetic join'd.

IMBRIUS.

But ye compell'd the depths to yield their prey?

LYNCEUS.

Ay — we redeem'd her ashes to the world.
Alas the torch of life was quench'd for ever!
I saw her when they stretch'd her on the sand, —
The dank sea-weeds all wreathed amidst her hair;

The shells and corals shrined about her heart,
Whereon I put my hand, but all was cold.
Yet o'er her features, humid with the surfs,
There linger'd gleams of intellectual light—
The last faint glories of departed mind:
And we gazed on her as the Delphians gaze
On some expiring Pythoness, who leaves
Her mystic signs and warnings to mankind.

IMBRIUS.

Some tell me she did speak, heard'st thou her words?

LYNCEUS.

I heard no voice save that which spake to all
In her distracted life and desperate death,
Which long, methinks, might prophesy to man:
Or on her silent lips we read this truth,
"I leave none but the dying on the earth!"

NOTES TO SAPPHO.

(1) *And soft as those the lyre of Orpheus breathed.*—P. 122.

Orpheus, whose songs wrought so many prodigies, having been torn to pieces by the Bacchantes, his head and lyre were thrown into the Hebrus, a river in Thrace, and conveyed by the waves of the sea to the shores of Methymna. In its passage, the voice of Orpheus sent forth enchanting sounds, accompanied by the lyre. The strings of which were gently agitated by the winds.

See *Ovid. Metam.* lib. ii. v. 55. *Lucian. Adv. Indoct.* t. iii. p. 109.

(2) *They have decreed your banishment from Lesbos.*—P. 127.

The part of the Parian Chronicle which mentions Sappho is almost entirely obliterated on the marble; but we read very distinctly that she fled, and embarked for Sicily. It was not, therefore, to follow Phaon, as is pretended, that she went to that island. It is probable that Alcæus engaged her in the conspiracy against Pittacus, and that she was banished from Mytilene at the same time with him and his partisans. See *Marmor. Oxon.* epoch 37.

(3) *Oh! fatal dowry that did gift thee thus.* — Page 132.

It was affirmed, that Phaon had received a box of ointment from Venus which conferred on him extraordinary beauty.

(4) *But yet remains to us the rose.* — Page 139.

I allude to the Pæstan rose often mentioned by the classic poets from the singularity of its blowing twice a-year, in the Spring and Autumn.

(5) ——— *Take thou my lyre, whose chords.* — Page 177.

A statue was erected in Sicily to the memory of Sappho. It was sculptured by Silanion, one of the most celebrated artists of his time.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

ON

HAYDON'S PICTURE

OF THE

RAISING OF LAZARUS.

HE comes! behold him, gazing Bethany!
A voice goes forth — the grave yields up the dead.
He comes! and in his fix'd yet living eye,
And in his ghastly lineaments, are read
Those secrets hidden in the shroud and shred;
With earth-dews humid from his recent tomb,
His slacken'd limbs, swathed and apparelled
In grave-clothes, pale, with noiseless movements come,
As if the last trump call'd him to his doom.

The sky is darken'd by a thunder-storm,
'Twould seem that Earth and Heaven had felt that hour,
While gleams of light play round a radiant form,
Whose right hand beckons with supremest power.
Low to the earth, the fear-struck menials cower;
And he, beloved of his Lord, looks on
With eyes that might have beam'd in Eden's bower;
And holy smiles to see the triumph won,
The ETERNAL SIRE, resplendent in the SON!

And Mary kneels beside her Saviour—fair
And meek, though bow'd in utter hopelessness
Of grief for him she saw entombed there;
Whose dying brow received her last caress.
While she, more framed in nature's hardiness,
The high-soul'd Martha, lifts her eye intent,
Amidst its tears and shades of doubtfulness;
Beholds her brother in the yawning rent,
And owns with awe the power omnipotent.

But who shall speak the mother's start of joy,
When to her arms the cave's surrendering deep
Gives back her lost, her once heart-cradled boy,
Born to new life from that mysterious sleep.
And she would break from his more cautious keep,
Her wondering partner; who, with dubious mind,
Feels in this hour his mortal sinews creep,
Or doubts that subtle spell his sense may bind,
Or deems the vision of unhallow'd kind.

There stands a child of Nature, he whose faith,
Since crown'd with martyrdom and shrined on high,
Once falter'd on the ocean's billowy path,
And wept away his sin on Calvary.
And there the scoffer leers with impious eye,
Leagued with the hypocrite, who durst not raise
His look on that which stamps his blasphemy;
As some night-prowling demon turns his gaze
In hatred from the sun's ascending haze.

But one looks from the high encircling wall,
With eye of scrutiny and pallid brow,
Intent on him yet dawning from the pall,
As he would fathom all its depths, and how
Earth's doomed offspring may endure the blow.
In his calm aspect lives distemper's ray;
His mind, communing not with things below,
Would bid the awaken'd Lazarus betray
How fares the spirit parted from the clay.

THE

ENTRANCE

OF

THE GOTHS INTO ROME

IN 410:

ELEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-THREE YEARS AFTER HER FOUNDATION. *

'Twas eve — the shades of many a tower-crown'd hill
Fell sombre on the Tiber's ancient flood;
But in the west a red light linger'd still,
And broad o'er Rome the sun sunk down in blood,
When, to her gates, the fierce Barbarian strode;
The German couch'd with him from Parthia's shore,
Encircling "The Devoted!" as the brood,
Shaking the Indian forest with their roar,
Gloat on their prey, impatient of his gore.

* See Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chap. xxxi.

The Destinies have doom'd thee! He who came
Where Argos rose, and Athens reign'd supreme,
Comes now to wrap thy midnight streets in flame,
'Till from thy proud halls Ruin's incense steam,
And Tiber roll his waves a redder stream.
But he who wears thy diadem on his brow,
Why comes he not thy laurels to redeem?
Sport of a king whom menial cowards cow,
Rome — thou'rt deserted and degraded now!

It is thy hour of slumber, — in their homes,
For the last time, thy children lie in sleep;
But lo! thy *Helots* wake, — the spoiler comes, —
The Gothic trumpet peals its thunders deep,
Rousing thy startled senate. On they sweep,
In conquering myriads, through those glorious ways
Where trod thy heroes, and where gods did keep
Their sumptuous orgies in those golden days
That crown'd thee with a star's resplendent haze.

Fled is the lustre of a thousand years —
Spoiler of nations ! thou wert spoiled then —
Thy classic forum gleam'd with Scythian spears;
Thy Coliseum it became a den;
But still the plunderer spared the Vatican:
Thy Christian creed controll'd lust's avid eye;
A monarch's voice pronounced the solemn ban;
And through the bloody streets they bore on high
Thy sacred wealth, with shout and psalmody.

But brief their amnesty; the word was given,
The hell-hound Rapine all unkennell'd roam'd:
Alaric deem'd his tribute paid to Heaven,
And Rome, to sack, and sword, and death was doom'd.
Then fell patrician proud, and warrior plumed:
Her virgins yielded to Barbarian lust,
Calling on Roman sires who lay inhumed,
Or writhing 'neath the Goth's remorseless thrust,
'Till trampling thousands blent them with the dust.

How stoodst thou then? star-crowned Capitol!
And thou Pantheon, pride of pagan Rome,
Heardst round thy gates Barbaric warfare roll,
And bore thee like a queen to meet thy doom.
Then Trajan's pillar tower'd above a tomb;
And wrecks of splendour strew'd the Appian way;
And from the palaces a sound did come,
Mocking the captive princes in decay;
For held they there their fearful holiday.

And Rome became a mart for her own spoil,
Her children merchandise. — The ransom'd pray'd
But for that boon which drove them from her soil;
And, self-exiled to foreign shores, they laid
Their wearied limbs in Mauritanian glade;
Or sat and wept by Bethle'm's ruin'd wall,
And hung their songless harps beneath thy shade —
Oh sacred Salem! then mightst thou recall
Thy ancient wrongs in thy destroyer's fall.

How are the mighty fallen! — in yon grove
Where droop the clusters of the pliant vine,
Even in those haunts Lucullus used to love,
The hordes of Elb their giant limbs recline,
And midst those plane-trees, Cicero, that were thine,
Far from the rigour of their northern snows,
They quaff from golden cups Falernian wine;
Whilst the fair offspring of their vanquish'd foes
Kneel round their couch, and guard their rude repose.

Roma! the beautiful, the proud! 'tis past —
Prey of the Goth, the Scythian, and the Hun;
A tottering empire saw thy sky o'ercast,
And deem'd the ruin of the world begun.
Thy bowers may bloom beneath their southern sun;
Her vines yet purple o'er Campania's coast;
Old Tiber still his time-worn course may run;
Italia of her prostrate queen shall boast,
Yet art thou but the tomb of that thou wast.

ON

THE SISTER OF KÖRNER, (1)

THE

GERMAN POET.

She sat with her pale ringlets drooping o'er
Her fairer forehead, and her white arms spread
Upon the semblance of her brother dead;
That last work of her love — for never more
Shall she essay with cunning hand to trace
The lineaments of a less worshipp'd face.
And as the bard, to whom such warning came
Mysterious (2), his own death-dirge to frame
Did toil, 'tis said, unceasingly; so she
From her sad task could never weaned be:
Nor would she walk to taste the balmy air
Beyond the tomb where her young poet slept;
And on his clay her dewy eye-lids wept,
And morn and evening ever found her there.

She thought of his mute harp and laurel crown,
That from his bier look'd all so gory down;
She thought of his nipt youth, and for his sake
Her gentle heart, nerve after nerve, did break.
Oh! there were days of bliss, too well remember'd;
Hours when with him she had roved in the light
Of the red eve fast closing into night;
And moments fond and fine; — but they are number'd!
Her grief, it was not like the grief of those
Who shriek around the bier, on which they strew
Their vestments and their hair in tragic show;
But 'twas the deadly — calm — unheard repose
Of every earthly passion: — thus the rose
In maiden sweetness droops, nor shows the guest
Deep-hidden in the ruins of her breast;
But though she mourn'd in secret, there was seen
In her fair aspect, placid, calm, serene,
The traces of those tears that nightly flow'd,
The mute portraying of a spirit bow'd.
And paler grew her cheek, and meek her eye,
As if it gazed more on Eternity:
And though around her beautiful lips there play'd
An angel smile, as in her happier hours,
Like sun-gleams kissing the cold wintry flowers,
Death still was there, though he awhile delay'd

To strike — perchance because she was so good
And saintly fair, or he in gentler mood.
But her days were told over, and they fled
Swiftly away, hour after hour, until
She had wrought out that tablet of her skill,
That fatal, fond memorial of the dead.
Then, for the last time, she walk'd forth at eve,
Beside her brother's monument to grieve;
And clasp'd her hands, and look'd upon the ray
Of the bright sunset; and look'd up to heaven,
To which her last, pure, earthly thoughts were given;
Then on the world so wonderful she cast
One farewell gaze; — and then her spirit pass'd
To its own realms, and sweet and calm she lay
In marble beauty on her brother's clay.

THE SPARTAN MOTHER,

A SKETCH.

METHOUGHT I sunk into the lapse of Time;
And through the vista of long ages past
Sent my enquiring sight. There came to me
Visions of many things — heroes and sages,
And mighty lawgivers, whose wisdom, borne
Down life's full tide, leave, like Peruvian streams,
Rich spoils behind them. Thus I mused upon
The greatness of the past; — then seem'd the present
Garb'd in frivolity, and man degenerate.
My vision showed me the Athenian groves,
Where her philosophers, in simple guise,
With brow serene, taught high morality.
Then sought I for Thermopylæ. Thy grave,
Oh proud Leonidas! — thy epitaph,
Thine, and the heroes with thee, rose before me;
Telling your glory, not alone to Sparta,
But to the universe!

* * * * *

The vision changed —
Bright things fled far, and a dim form arose,
And in its rising grew reality;
Or like to form of marble, with smooth brow,
Round which the hair wreathed as in Grecian statue,
But simpler, and more true it was to nature.
And grief, too, there, was traced, grief deep and silent;
Grief, it would seem, that struggled with its vastness,
And would be all conceal'd, and strove, but could not.
One arm sustain'd a burden, but the mantle
Clothing the bearer veil'd it dark and closely.
Forms stood around, they, like to this, were female,
And all were mute and moveless; and they gazed —
Some sternly calm, and some few with compassion,
But none like her with shrouded breast — in anguish.
Her cheek was pale, her large eye's heavy languor
Seem'd dawning from the depths of suffering nature;
And her frame droop'd, and her lips lack'd their rubies,
Yet she repined not. — 'Twas a Spartan Mother!

Methought I knew her simple history, —
The daughter of a Spartan judge, — the widow
Of one who fell in battle 'gainst the Persians.
Brief had her portion been of happiness,

Her hero left her for Thermopylæ,
And there he died upon his shield in glory!
Cold is his couch, but is it not immortal?
And she could suffer, for she was a Spartan —
Could smile when others smiled, whilst hopeless anguish
Prey'd on her mind — could wear her crown of triumph
Though her heart mourn'd in secret o'er its loneness.
All that was left to her of life then centred
In that sweet being yet unseen by her;
But though unknown, still cherish'd with a fondness
Which only mothers feel for that they think on,
Day after day, and nightly in their dreaming,
And long for with the heart's impatient yearning.
That hour came, and she nerved her soul to meet it;
Call'd on Lucina to sustain her; and
Pray'd that her babe might be in form perfected;
And bore without a sigh the throes of nature,
Seeking her promised recompense with gladness
They laid the babe upon her panting bosom;
There was a hush like death, word there they spake not,
But gazed on her who gazed upon her infant,
Clasping him with a shriek, her recent sufferings,
In all their keenness, could not have extorted.

Lift now the veil, — remove yon shrouding mantle, —
And say what seest thou? — Wrapt in tranquil slumber
An infant lies, nor hath the bursting peach-bloom
A tint more delicate than his young features;
But one limb lacks its look'd for symmetry,
And 'tis enough — it dooms him to destruction.
Victim of Spartan greatness! — little deem they
Who will thy death, how that contemn'd casket
Might, in good time, disclose a precious jewel.
But 'tis enough — 'tis the decree of Sparta,
And thou must die for the default of Nature!
His mother gazes on that tiny form,
Which she but looks upon to lose and weep for,
And sees, as mothers see, unwonted beauties;
And hides that which she doats on from those gazers,
With sick despair, as though their eyes destroy'd him.
Then a wild thought darts through her burning brain;
May she not fly with him to gentler nations,
And rear him up in peaceful solitude,
Where none may chide her? — 'Tis some phantom mocks her,
And, mocking, cries to her, "Thou art a Spartan!"

THE LAST VIGIL OF JULIAN.

THAT memorable enterprise of Julian against the Persians, commenced in glory, terminating how fatally for him and for the Romans, presents numerous incidents full of interest. I have selected the last Vigil of the Apostate Emperor, during his retreat from the impregnable walls of Ctesiphon, in the vain hope of gaining the passage of the Tigris. His armies harassed by a slow and dangerous march over a desolated country, and in the oppressive heat of an Assyrian summer, perishing by famine, and by the formidable charges of the Persian cavalry, his mind sinking under an insurmountable weight of difficulties, still preserved its unvarying devotion to philosophy, and to the ancient worship of the gods. In the elegant language of Gibbon we find the following picture of this last Vigil of his favourite hero, to which I am well aware my efforts cannot give additional beauty. "While Julian struggled with the almost insuperable difficulties of his situation, the silent hours of the night were still devoted to study and contemplation. Whenever he closed his eyes in short and inter-

rupted slumbers, his mind was agitated with painful anxiety, nor can it be thought surprising, that the Genius of the empire should once more appear before him covering the horn of abundance with a funeral veil, and slowly retiring from the imperial tent. The monarch started from his couch, and, stepping forth to refresh his weary spirits with the coolness of the midnight air, he beheld a fiery meteor which shot athwart the sky, and suddenly vanished. Julian was convinced that he had seen the menacing countenance of the god of war. Julian had sworn in a passion, *nunquam se Marti sacra factum.*"

Since I wrote The Last Vigil of Julian I have seen announced "Julian the Apostate," a dramatic poem by Sir Aubrey de Vere Hunt, Bart., but as I have not yet read it, I can only be accused of having accidentally fixed on the same subject; and as mine is a mere sketch, not very likely to be placed in competition with the above-mentioned poem, I shall not withdraw it; although, had I previously known this circumstance, I probably should never have written it.

THE LAST VIGIL OF JULIAN.

NIGHT deepens o'er Assyria. In the camp
Where lie the Roman host, silence and sleep
Reign with a hush profound. Sleep, not like his
The labouring hind's, who flings him on the turf,
And, heedless, rests there till the day-god wakes him:
Sleep, not like that which on the silken couch
Steals on the heavy lids, and steeps the limbs
In the soft languor of voluptuousness:
But sleep, the offspring of out-wearied nature;
Sleep, like the grasp of some resistless foe
Clinging, despite our efforts to unhand him,
And baffling each device of watchfulness:
Slumber, and dreams, and visions of the morrow,
Nerving the hand clasp'd in the ready hilt,
Heaving the buckler, now become the pillow,
And framing on the lip the call to battle!

And sleep pervades the imperial tent. The lamp
Gleams through its silver valves a moon-like ray,
Steady and clear, shining on Julian's brow —
A classic light, meet for the solitude
Of Cynthia's worshipper: nor lingers it
On aught less chasten'd; there no trappings glitter,
Gorgeous with gold and rich embroidery;
No spoils of that proud land; no baubles wrought
With orient gems; no arts to court repose;
Nought is there nigh that couch, save he who there
Rests like the meanest of his warriors,
To mark the tent of Rome's imperial lord.
Beside him lie his helm, and his cairass,
Cast off, encumb'ring in that sultry clime;
For he, inured to meet Helvetian snows,
Droops in the heat of the Assyrian air.
The lamp streams on the lore of Attica;
A scroll traced in her Grecian characters,
Unfurl'd, betrays the monarch's nightly musings.
Combat, nor glory, nor disastrous flight,
Can wean him from his loved philosophy:
He toils while others rest; the midnight vigil,
The early sunrise, the long day's employ,
The eve of council, find him ever ready;

But the mind's fervour frets earth's frailer portion,
And yields subdued by nature. — Julian sleeps!
Dreams he of those Athenian groves where sped
His tranquil youth? or of the Persian plain
Where, now encamp'd, he waits the fearful crisis
Of a reign bright with glory? Dreams he thus,
And hears he not the irrevocable decree
Reveal'd by voice celestial? — reads his fate
And Rome's calamity in sign prophetic
Haunting his restless sleep? Behold the lip
Quivering, yet closed; the workings of the brow;
The eye compress'd, seeing all in the soul
Fearfully distinct; the quick-drawn breath;
The throbbing artery; the pale cheek flush'd;
The great heart bursting with its mighty secret,
Yet resolute to fathom it. He hears
The awful voice of Jove Capitoline;
Not as of yore in Gallia, calling him,
In tone triumphant, to the rule of nations:
He sees the Genius of his country, — pale
She rises, like a matron garb'd in woe;
With her long tresses streaming from beneath
Her funeral veil; and that once teeming horn
Of Rome's abundance mournfully reversed,

Pouring down tears and blood. Slowly
The form recedes, it faints, it fades, — departs,
With warning gesture, the Imperial tent.

The monarch started from his couch, — the light
Of that pale lamp shining so placidly.
The tents oppressive atmosphere, untemper'd
In that fierce clime by breath of Eolus,
Fever'd his weary spirits, and he rush'd
Forth from the camp, and was alone with Nature.
How beautiful that dome of southern starlight!
Moonless, nor streak'd by tint of lingering day;
But glowing like a mine of diamonds,
Whose rays fall mirror'd on the sparry floor:
Orb circling orb, like the bright eyes of angels
Looking down calmly on mortality.
But earth show'd not her wonted loveliness:
War, the destroyer, had been there; his shade
Stalk'd o'er her plains as though some mighty giant
Trampled their flowers and wither'd up their beauty.
Nor grove, nor grain, nor herb of generous juice,
Which might allay the dying camel's thirst,
Remnant nor wreck remain'd there — all was bare:
Nor cottage roof, nor fane, nor palace dome,

Stood there; nor fount, nor Temple of the Sun:
Nought met the gaze but one vast burning desert,
Where the sick reptile in the dust expired.
Then rose the hot wind from those arid plains,
Laden with faintness; with it numerous fire-flies,
Making the atmosphere all luminous,
And floating in it like a starry network,
Seem'd the bright halo of departing life.
No sound came from that huge encamped host,
Save when, perchance, the steed neigh'd loud and shrill,
Or the retiring guard clang'd his steel armour;
And these re-echoed with a clear response,
Marking the intervals of that great stillness.
Julian stood there alone. He gazed on heaven,
All there was glorious; —he gazed and worshipp'd: —
" Ye gods! whose everlasting shrines are there,
" Fix'd in the firmament; — whose sovereignty
" Pervades the universe; making the earth,
" The heavens, yon shining orbs, the elements,
" One boundless, one imperishable fane:
" Divinities! beneath whose sacred ensigns
" Rome the triumphant hath subdued the world:
" Oh ye immutable gods! whom I have served,
" Amidst this impious age, devotedly;

" Making your altars, newly broken down,
" To smoke with the rich steam of sacrifice:
" Grant that I fall as I have reign'd — in glory!
" Fate nears with rapid steps; yon midnight shades
" Fleet not more fast before the eye of day
" Than come the heralds of my destiny:
" In dreams, in auguries, ye have reveal'd it,
" In silent signs which came to haunt my slumber;
" Then let me set full in my noon of fame,
" Fall on my shield, and sleep amidst the Cæsars!
" Rome — let my name be then enroll'd with thine;
" I would have made thee that thou ne'er shalt be
" Had not stern fate forbade it; — but 'tis past —
" I weep for thee, yet ask not for thy tears;
" Weep for thy sons and their apostasy.
" Forsaken of the gods! on thee shall dawn
" Never again thy once resplendent star:
" I have not dimm'd its lustre; I have borne
" Thy ponderous sceptre others soon may break;
" And thou wilt cast some wreaths on Julian's bier.
" Oh! that my death could purchase thee one hour,
" Such as the Antonines and Hadrian saw:
" But they are gone for ever; and the time,
" Though lowering in thy horizon's verge, shall come,

" When thou shalt be but an immortal name !
" Eternal gods ! yet — yet one palpable sign
" Big with futurity."
Lo ! 'thwart the sky,
Rapid and bright, a blazing meteor rush'd ;
Marking its broad track on that star-lit vault
From east to west ; then sinking suddenly
In depths of night, leaving no trace behind :
Whilst Jove replied in thunders.
Julian bow'd
His forehead to the earth ; his spirit knew
The angry aspect of the god of war,
Wrathful and menacing ; yet trembled not ;
But, with erected form, and mind as calm,
He gazed again upon the tranquil heavens

ANGELICA.

She stole upon us like the light
Of stars upon a summer night;
Or like the moon's soft tranquil ray
When day's bright beams have pass'd away.
So calm, so saintlike, so serene,
Almost unfelt, almost unseen,
Yet fixing round our hearts, secure,
A link so changeless, dear, and pure,
We only sigh to feel again
The gentle power that wove the chain.
Her beauty was of that pure kind
Which only seeks to cheer the mind;
Like flowers that bloom amid the shade,
Their loveliness but half display'd,
Though yielding a perfume more rare
Than those which court the sun-light's glare.
She faded too; so sweetly mild,
'Twas like the slumber of a child

When morning's ray first streaks the skies,
And bids us hope to see him rise
With cheek and eye of livelier bloom;
So shall she rise from death's dark tomb:
Her beauties then shall live and glow
With brighter grace than here below.
While yet she, suffering, linger'd here,
She shed not one repining tear;
No word of murmuring, no complaint:
And when we saw her weak and faint,
And knew that life must wear away,
Though sinking by a slow decay,
The sorrowing tear would often start,
Speaking the grief that choak'd the heart, —
Grief which we strove not to conceal.
Then would she smile, and playful give
To us that hope she could not feel: —
" Weep not for me, I yet may live."
Thou yet mayst live? Ah yes! that eye
Confirm'd the truth; — but in the sky,
Thy life, a life of glory waits,
To crown thee at the Eternal Gates!

THE RECLUSE.

It was a chamber through whose casement shone
The day's last glories; lighting up, with dyes
That might have dimm'd the Indian topaz-stone,
The simple cornice and slight draperies.
'Twas no saloon deck'd out for courtly eyes:
Flowers garlanded with care, but perishing;
A harp, whose chords had ceased their melodies,
Or murmur'd sadly when on languid wing
The breezes came, and waked a golden string.

An open book lay there; some lines were traced
On its wide margin femininely fair, —
Words shadowing forth the lofty thoughts that graced
Her mind, who dwelt an Eremitess there.
She lived forgotten of the world, though ne'er
Lapsing into forgetfulness. The dream
Of years gone by was on her, and howe'er
The few who did commune with her might deem,
Her thought changed not the current of its stream.

And she was beautiful; — though sorrow's blight
Had touch'd her pensive brow, and tears had ta'en
From her dark eyes their luxury of light;
And time had deepen'd many an azure vein,
Now seen in all its mazy wanderings plain.
Still was she beautiful. Her nun-like stole
Might shroud some charms too early in their wane;
As clouds upon autumnal sunsets roll,
But leave the mellow twilight of the soul.

NOTES

TO

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

(1) THE SISTER OF KÖRNER.— Page 198.

Emma Sophia Louisa. — Silent grief for the loss of her beloved brother consumed her vital powers, and allowed her only time sufficient for finishing a portrait of him, and making a drawing of his grave, in which, with his, her mortal remains now repose.

(2) *And as the bard, to whom such warning came*
Mysterious. — Page 198.

The detail of this mysterious warning is to be found in the life of Mozart. It is as follows: — One day, when his spirits were unusually oppressed, a stranger of a tall dignified appearance was introduced. His manners were grave and impressive. He told Mozart that he came from a person who did not wish to be known, to request he would compose a solemn mass, as a requiem for the soul of a friend he had recently lost, and whose death he was desirous of commemorating by this solemn service. Mozart undertook the task, and engaged to have it completed in a month. The stranger begged to know what price he set upon his work, and immediately paid him a hundred ducats, and departed. The mystery of this visit seemed to have a very strong effect on the mind of the musician. He brooded over it for some time, and then, suddenly calling for writing materials, began to compose

with extraordinary ardour. This application, however, was more than his strength would support; it brought on fainting fits, and his increasing illness obliged him to suspend the work. 'I am writing this requiem for myself,' said he abruptly to his wife; 'one day it will serve for my own funeral.' And this impression never after left him. At the expiration of the month the mysterious stranger appeared, and demanded the requiem. 'I have found it impossible,' said Mozart, 'to keep my word; the work has interested me more than I expected, and I have extended it beyond my first design: I shall require another month to finish it.' The stranger made no objection, but observed, that for this additional trouble it was but just to increase the premium, and laid down fifty ducats more; and promised to return at the appointed time. Astonished at his whole proceeding, Mozart ordered a servant to follow this singular personage, and, if possible, to find out who he was. The man, however, soon lost sight of him, and was obliged to return as he went. Mozart was now more than ever persuaded that he was a messenger from the other world to warn him that his end was approaching. He applied with fresh zeal to the requiem (his celebrated mass in D minor), and in spite of the exhausted state both of mind and body, completed it before the end of the month. At the appointed time the stranger returned, but Mozart was no more!"

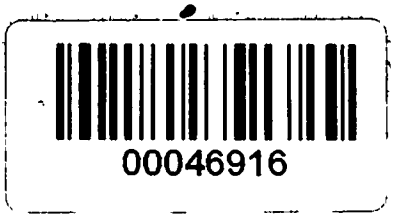
THE END.

LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

ERRATA.

Page ix. line 15. for "scene" read "strain."
7. line 19. for "reliquary" read "reliquiary."
9. line 7. for "He" read "Her."
18. line 2. for "tranquil" read "crystal."
34. line 11. for "she" read "he."
38. line 5. for "interwined" read "intertwined."
155. line 18. for "by" read "my."

Night before the Bridal.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